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Enno Franzius

HISTORY OF THE ORDER OF

Assassins



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HISTORY OF THE ORDER OF ASSASSINS

الْوَلَدُ وَبِيعَ الْقَتِيبَ وَالْبَتَّانَ وَغَادَا لَيْلًا بَعَثَ مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ أَبِي طَالِبٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ وَمَالَكَ
 إِلَيْهَا النَّاسُ أُولَى بِكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ فَكَانَ لِي لَيْلَى فَكَانَتْ تَقْبَلُ كُلَّ مَنْ يَدْعُو فَتَحْسِبُ مِنْ لَدُنِّي لَا مِنْ لَدُنِّي



اللَّهُمَّ شَهِدْ لِي يَا مَنْ لَا يُؤْخِرُ عَذَابِي عَادَا أَهْلَ الْفُتُورِ نَصْرِي وَلِشِدَائِي مِنْ حَقِّكَ لَا تَأْخُذْ لِي بِسُوءِ
 حَسَبِي مَا دَانِي وَتَرْفَعِي أَنْفُوعِي وَأَسْأَلُكَ اللَّهُمَّ هَلْ سَبَقْتُ قَدْرًا فَوْزِيهِ الرَّابِعُ

Of the half billion Muslims in the world about fifty million are Shiites (of whom the Assassins are a subsect). The Shiites believe that the only rightful successors to the Prophet as leaders of Islam are Ali (his cousin, adopted son, and son-in-law) and his progeny.

This fourteenth-century miniature, which appears in a historical work of the Arabo-Persian Shiite scholar Biruni (973-1048), depicts Muhammad (left center) declaring the right of Ali (right center) to succeed him as true head of Islam. Ali, apparently foreseeing the bitter years of frustration that lie ahead, remains silent. The inscription reads: He [the Prophet] said, "Am I not more worthy of you than you yourselves?" They answered, "Certainly." He said, "Then of those of whom I am the Master, of them also will Ali be the Master. Oh God, protect him who protects him, afflict him who afflicts him, help him who helps him, forsake him who forsakes him." [Photo, *Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris*]

BY THE SAME AUTHOR:

History of the Byzantine Empire

TO MY SONS

Enno D., the Reverend Frederic,
AND *Roderic*

FOREWORD

The term "Assassins" is employed in this book to identify those Ismailis who at the end of the eleventh century acknowledged Nizar as their Imam and who in the twentieth century accept the Aga Khan as such. It is not in any sense used deprecatorily.

The word "Order" is used to include all initiates into the religion of Hasan Sabbah.

A historian of the Assassins encounters three major difficulties: hostility of the main sources to the Assassins, mystification or concealment of facts by Assassin sources, and reluctance of today's Assassins to impart information.

Islamic names create another problem. Much confusion results from the Muslim practice of naming sons after a restricted number of Hebrew and Islamic heroes and prophets. Moreover, there seems to be no limit to the number of generations an individual may include in his name. An Aleppine historian thus bears the appellation Abul-kasim-Omar-ibn-Ahmad-ibn Hibat-allah . . . ibn Abi Djarada-Kamal-al-Din-ibn-al-Adim-al-Okaili-al Halabi-al-Hanafi. No disrespect is intended to his illustrious forebears when he is identified simply as Kamal al-Din. In other cases, in the interest of brevity and

X FOREWORD

clarity even more arbitrary surgery is performed, both nominally and orthographically.

Dates after part and chapter titles do not refer to the headings but to the period covered.

E. F.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To Dr. Jean Ulyxes Korée I express my gratitude for his suggestion of the subject and his perceptive understanding of its problems.

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ONE



The Ismailis



613-1078



MUSLIM EXPLOSION [613-656]

On a stifling June day in 632, in a chamber adjoining the mosque of Medina, the gray-bearded Prophet Muhammad, his head on the lap of his young wife Aisha, breathed his last.

Born in Mecca about 570 and orphaned at a tender age, he had become an honest, sturdy, black-bearded trader, had married a wealthy widow, had turned to theological meditations, and about 613 had begun to preach submission to one god, Allah, Whose Prophet he announced himself to be and Whose Will he conveyed in a sacred book, the Koran.

His religious agitation had disturbed the peace of Mecca, which, though situate in a desolate valley surrounded by bleak hills and exposed to the pitiless glare of sun and sand, was not only a commercial emporium, but also a pilgrimage center with the shrines of many gods. His safety threatened, Muhammad in 622 had fled two hundred fifty miles north to Yathrib,

which he had renamed Medina (City of the Prophet).^{*} From here he had proselytized and plundered his foes' caravans with such success that many spoil-conscious desert tribes had adhered to Islam (Submission to the Will of God). His spiritual and temporal rule had spread over a large part of Arabia, and in 630 he had returned to Mecca and destroyed the images of other gods.

It is generally believed that he had not named a successor to himself as Imam, that is, as spiritual and secular head of Islam. During his last illness, however, he had chosen Aisha's kindly father, Abu Bakr, to lead the daily prayers in his stead, which seemed to designate him as his successor. Abu Bakr, who was loyal, capable, and disinterested, was, in fact, elected Khalif (Successor) by Muhammad's followers in Medina.

There is a tradition that in his last moments Muhammad had asked for his beloved adopted son Ali, had named him his successor, and had died holding his hand. Ali, who was now about thirty, was also his cousin, the husband of his only surviving child, Fatima, and the father of his two grandsons. He was, like the elderly Abu Bakr, one of Muhammad's first converts and had been ever in the forefront of the battles that established Muslim supremacy in Arabia. Those who believed in the hereditary principle felt that Ali and his progeny rather than Abu Bakr were entitled to the succession.

However that might be, before his death in 634 Abu Bakr, disregarding his own family and in agreement with other leaders, named Omar his successor. During the incumbencies of Abu Bakr and Omar the borders of the Khalifate expanded. Dissident prophets were suppressed and the entire Arabian peninsula brought under Muslim control.

^{*} The withdrawal to Medina (*Hejira*, flight) marks the first year of the Muslim era. Since the Muslim calendar is based on the lunar year of 354 days, it is unrelated to the seasons.

This constituted a problem for the desert-dwellers. Their most lucrative activity was pillage, but forays against fellow Muslims were forbidden. In the north, however, were two rich realms—the Christian Roman Empire with its capital at Constantinople and the Zarathustran Neo-Persian dominion of the Sassanids, which extended over Mesopotamia and the Iranian tableland. Both powers had been weakened by a quarter-century of war that had ended in 628. Moreover, the great mass of Persians probably had little interest in defending the oppressive order of the Sassanid state, while in the Roman Empire the inhabitants of Syria and Egypt had been alienated by religious persecution because of their differing Christological doctrines. Thus, little resistance was offered the Arabs, and their raids were transformed into conquests.

In contrast to the disunity of their foes was the newly found cohesion of the previously fractious Arab tribesmen. At this early stage their strength probably lay less in religious fervor than in the union and dedicated leadership that Islam gave them and in the explosive power of a hungry nation, whose numbers exceeded the resources of the arid peninsula. Moreover, submission to their rule seemed to offer few evils. They permitted the conquered peoples to retain their laws, lands, customs, and religions, and they imposed a tribute that was generally less onerous than their taxes had been. As a result, the Arabs tore from the Roman Empire Palestine, Syria, and Egypt, and by mid-century were to overthrow and replace the Sassanids. As the centuries after the conquest passed, most of the inhabitants of the quondam Sassanid realm and the former Roman territory slipped into Islam.

When in 644 an enslaved Persian Christian inflicted mortal wounds on Omar in Medina, the boundaries of the Khalifate reached eastward into the Iranian plateau, northward to the Armenian foothills, and westward to Libya. Before yielding the ghost, Omar named a body of six leaders to choose his

successor. For the third time Ali was passed over and the mild, sexagenarian Othman of the prosperous Meccan Omaiad clan was selected. He was murdered by mutineers in Medina in 656. A fateful event had transpired: Muslims had shed Muslim blood and the unity of Islam had been shattered.

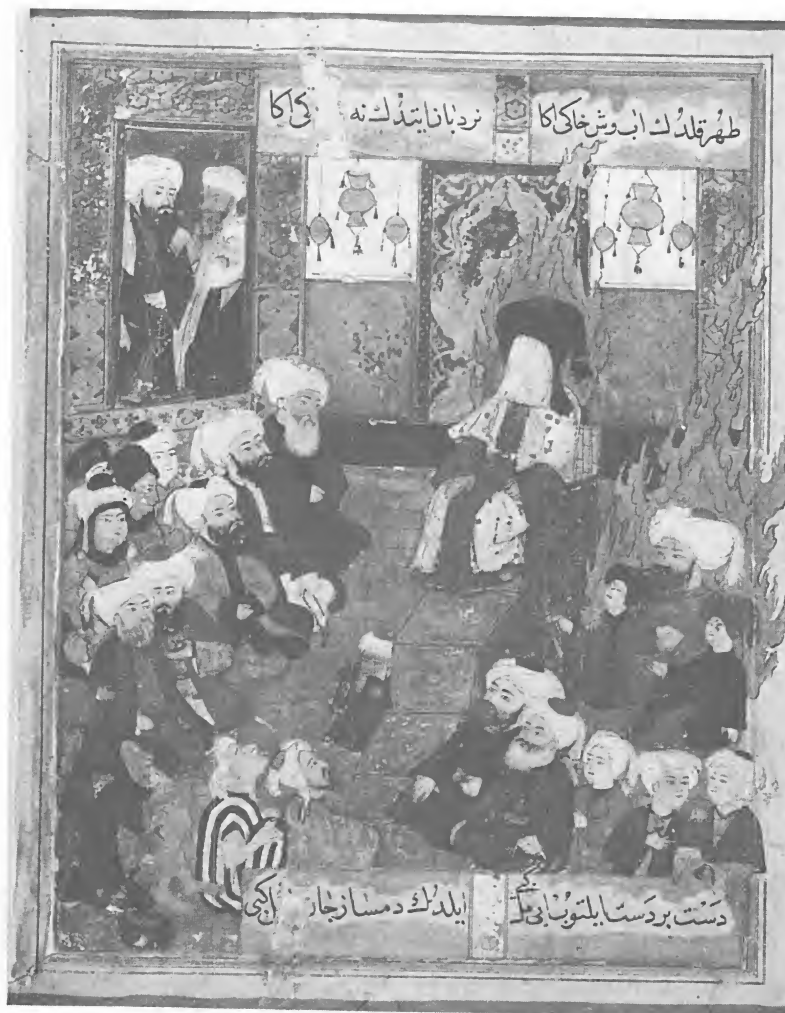


SHIITES [656-750]

At this dark moment Ali—now a bald, corpulent, white-bearded quinquagenarian—was elected Khalif. He confronted a sad situation. Aisha raised the standard of revolt in Irak, and he reluctantly joined issue on the field of battle near Basra (656). Although the vigorous forty-five-year-old widow incited her warriors from camelback, she lost the day and was gently retired to Medina.

But Ali's trials were not over. Muawia, Governor of Syria, cousin of Othman, and self-styled avenger of his bloody shirt, refused to recognize Ali as Khalif. Ali faced him at Siffin near the Euphrates. Negotiations proving fruitless, the two armies clashed (657). Fortune was attending Ali's arms when Muawia's men placed pages of the Koran on their lances. Ali's troops stopped fighting.

In the arbitration that followed, his representative was



This sixteenth-century Turkish manuscript shows Muhammad (whose sacred features are covered) preaching. On the right is Ali between his two young sons Hasan and Husain (the Prophet's grandsons). [Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1955]

outwitted and the election of a new Khalif was apparently proposed. Ali rejected the verdict as contrary to the Koran. Muawia seized Egypt, attacked Arabia, was proclaimed Khalif in Jerusalem (660), and invaded Irak, where Ali had made Kufa his capital.

It was in 661 in this city, founded by the Arabs in 638 as a garrison town not far from the ruins of Babylon, that a Kharijite sectary struck Ali down with a poisoned sword. So ended the frustrating life of a humane and generous man, the champion of the right of alien converts to equality with Arabs.

The Kufans bestowed the khalifal dignity on his son Hasan, who, however, abdicated in favor of Muawia in exchange for a large sum of money. Muawia conceded that Hasan's descent entitled him to the high office, assuring him that if his abilities had also been superior to his own, he would unhesitatingly have sworn allegiance to him. Hasan withdrew to Medina, where he was poisoned by one of his wives eight years later, while Muawia made Damascus his capital and succeeded in establishing his family as the khalifal dynasty—the Omaiad—despite Arab preference for the elective principle.

When he died in 680 and was succeeded by his son Yazid, Ali's son Husain, now past fifty, set out from Mecca for Kufa to assume the khalifal office. He reached the Euphrates at Karbala with seventy men. His camp was encompassed by an overwhelming force, and when he refused to surrender, the Omaiad army attacked. His sons, brothers, kinsmen, and retainers were cut down. Finally only this last grandson of the Prophet remained alive. He charged into the enemy ranks, hewing furiously about him until he was felled by a sword blow on the neck.

His head was severed and thrown at the feet of the Omaiad governor. As the latter turned it over with his stick, a voice from the shuddering crowd warned him to be gentle with the face that the lips of the Apostle of God had touched. The

heartless man ordered the corpse to be trampled, mutilated, and fed to the vultures to prevent its recognition. The head is said to be buried in Husain's tomb at Karbala, which, like Ali's putative grave at Najaf, is a holy site for many Muslims.

The martyrdom of Husain and the Alids not only shocked Islam; it transformed the Alid khalifal claim into a powerful religious, political, social, and, as far as the Persians were concerned, even national, movement—the Shiites (partisans of Ali). In medieval Islam there was no distinction between church and state. The Khalif was simultaneously religious and secular head. Social and political opponents of the regime formed religious movements. Thus, the Shiites came to view the progeny of Ali as semi-divine Imams (that is, rightful spiritual and temporal rulers of Islam) and as Mahdis (that is, messianic Imams, destined by God to usher in a millennium of truth, justice, and equality). Some even came to think that a given Imam did not die but went into concealment until his return as Mahdi to inaugurate an era of truth and justice.

That Shiism found widespread support in Irak and Iran may be attributed to the millennial rule of semi-celestial potentates, to the resentment of many Persian converts at their inferior status to the Arab ruling class, and to the persistence of Persian dynastic traditions. In this connection it is interesting to note that it was widely believed that Husain had married a daughter of the last Sassanid sovereign.

The Kufans deeply deplored their failure to support Husain, formed the Army of Penitents, and rallied under a gifted leader, Muktar. All adult male scions of the Prophet having been butchered at Karbala, Muktar in 685 proclaimed Muhammad, Ali's son by a Hanafite woman, Imam and Mahdi.*

* During Fatima's lifetime Ali had taken no other wife, but Fatima had died a half year after the Prophet.

Despite the exalted position to which Muktar had called him, Muhammad seems to have remained aloof from the movement. While Muktar defeated the forces of the Omaiad Khalif on the banks of the Zab in 686, he was killed the following year defending Kufa against the army of an anti-Khalif. Although his career was brief, he had channeled the course of history. After him the Shiites remained imbued with an unshaken faith in their Imams and in the advent of the Mahdi. Moreover, by demanding equality for Persian and Iraki converts, Muktar had launched the assault on Arab domination of Islam.

For the nonce, however, the Omaiad Khalif, Abd al-Malik, overthrew the anti-Khalif (692) and installed a Governor of Irak and Iran who is reported to have slain at least a hundred twenty thousand persons during his twenty-two-year incumbency. This figure to a large extent indicates the strength of the Shiites, whose numbers included many of the conquered peoples who had accepted Islam but resented Arab preponderance.

In fact, while during the first half of the eighth century the Omaiads were extending the Khalifate's borders to the Atlantic, the Pyrenees, the Indus, and the Chinese confines, within their empire the Shiites were organizing a vast politico-religious conspiracy to overthrow them. Nor was it difficult to sow discord in the Omaiad realm, for few Arabs had accepted Muhammad's principle of equality. On the contrary, a gulf of contempt, hatred, and antagonism sundered not only Arab from alien, but also town from town, tribe from tribe, townsman from desert-dweller, early convert from neophyte, northern Arab from southern Arab. Thus, aged Arabian animosities were perpetuated in the vast domain of the Omaiads, undermining their power.

But the Shiites also were weakened by their tendency to

fragment into sects and subjects over which descendant of Ali was the true Imam. In 716 a childless Alid Imam, the son of Muhammad ibn Hanafiya, is believed to have died bequeathing his Imamate to the Abbasids (progeny of Abbas, an uncle of the Prophet and of Ali). The Abbasids' claim to the divine Alid succession was thus considerably strengthened, and in 747 their black banners were unfurled in a village near Merv. Sweeping westward, the Abbasid army drove the Omaiad Khalif into Egypt, where in 750 he fell with his last troops.

Toward the Omaiad house the Abbasids were ruthless. An Abbasid pledged eighty Omaiad princes safety and invited them to a banquet in a Palestinian town. When he had them in his grasp, killers began clubbing them to death. Leather covers were spread over the dead and dying dynasts, whose groans and quivering bodies apparently whetted the appetite of the faithless Abbasid. Despite a merciless manhunt, a young Omaiad escaped and founded in Spain a dynasty that was to rule almost three centuries and to give Western Europe its most resplendent medieval civilization. Meanwhile, the Abbasids transferred their fury from the living to the dead, exhuming and abusing the remains of the Omaiad Khalifs.

The accession of the Abbasids was more than the change of a dynasty: it marked the beginning of a new era. The patriarchal Omaiads gave way to the absolute Abbasids, beside whose throne lay the executioner's leather spread. The Arab-dominated state yielded to a cosmopolitan realm based on religion rather than race. Persians played a predominant part, and any influence that Arabs retained was as Muslims, not as Arabs.

The capital of the Khalifate was moved from Syria to Irak, to the site of an ancient Sumerian settlement on the Tigris, some of whose bricks bore the imprint of Nebuchadnezzar—Baghdad. This village was replaced by a circular city with

three concentric brick walls. Encompassed by fertile gardens and located near natural trade routes, it soon became a great religious, cultural, and commercial center.

Once the Abbasids had established their power, they abandoned their Shiite allies and adopted orthodoxy—Sunnism. The Shiites responded with frequent but disunited insurrections, for they had divided into sects and subsects behind different Alids or pretendant Alids as Imams. These divisions reflected a variety of social, economic, political, and religious aspirations.

Shiism, then, which at the death of Muhammad was merely a faction favoring Ali's succession, became after Husain's martyrdom and Muktar's meteoric appearance a great politico-religious movement championing the rights of oppressed groups, in particular of non-Arab converts seeking equal status with Arabs. It absorbed many pre-Islamic concepts of Babylonian and Persian origin, such as divine incarnations, messianic advents, and the transmigration of souls. After the overthrow of Arab dominion in 750 it became essentially the haven of the downtrodden, whether Arab or non-Arab.



ISMAILIS [760-909]

About 760 Shiism gave birth to a faction from which centuries later the Assassins were to spring. This sect was the Ismailis. In typical Shiite fashion they broke away over the question of who was the true Imam.

The Imam Jafar, a scion of Ali through the martyred Husain, had transferred the succession from his son Ismail to his son Musa. It is alleged that he did this because of Ismail's insobriety, although it may have been the result of Ismail's connection with extremist revolutionary Shiites. At all events, Ismail's followers claimed that Jafar had no right to deprive his son of his divinely ordained status, since God would not change His Mind. Little is known of Ismail's life and death. He apparently predeceased his father in 760, although some Ismailis believe that he was still alive five years after his father's demise.

In due course Ismail's son Muhammad became the Ismailis' Imam and died the captive of the Abbasid Khalif Harun al-Rashid many years later.¹ * After him Ismaili Imams found it safer to remain hidden and to adopt acting Imams.² Through them and other trusted agents they guided the faithful, proselytized clandestinely, and conspired against the Abbasids.

* Superscript numerals refer to Notes (see pp. 231-232).



FATIMIDS [909-1078]

A devout agent of the Imam, the Yemenite Shii, appeared in northwestern Africa in 893 and rallied Berber tribes. By 909 he had overthrown the hereditary emir of the Abbasids and taken sacred Kairawan, whose famous Mosque of the Companion outside its walls is sanctified by its possession of what are reputed to be three hairs of the Prophet's beard. Shii liberated the imprisoned acting Imam, Obaidullah, whom he proclaimed the Mahdi.

Whether because Shii antagonized the mostly Sunnite townsmen by excessive Ismaili zeal or because he and some of the Berbers contemplated rebellion against a ruler who disappointed them because he lacked miraculous mahdian powers, Obaidullah in 910 murdered the man to whom he owed his elevation. Suppressing a Berber rising, he firmly established the Ismaili Khalifate, whose dynasty became known as Fati-

mid in honor of the Prophet's daughter, from whom its Imams claimed descent. He conciliated the Sunnites and expanded his borders westward to the Atlantic and eastward to Barca.

When he died in 934, he was succeeded by the hereditary Imam, Kaim (Ariser), who, being of the sacred house of Ali, was regarded as incarnating divinity.³ Kaim's grandson Muiz (Fortifier of God's Faith) took Egypt from the nominal control of the Abbasids in 969 and founded Cairo. Soon Syria and western Arabia, including Damascus and the holy cities of Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem, were annexed. It is recounted, possibly apocryphally, that when Muiz entered Cairo behind the coffins of his forebears, he was asked for proof of his descent from Ali. He is said to have drawn his sword and scattered coins, pronouncing the former his lineage and the latter his evidence.

Had other powers not barred the way, the Fatimids might well have pushed on and overthrown the decrepit Abbasid Khalifate. Instead, at the end of the tenth century Islam was still fragmented into three Khalifates: the Omaiad, whose writ was recognized in Spain and Morocco; the Fatimid, whose dominion reached from Algeria to Syria and western Arabia; and the Abbasid, whose actual authority was limited to the Baghdad area, but whose theoretic domain covered a series of independent states in Mesopotamia and Iran.

As the eleventh century progressed the boundaries of the Fatimid Khalifate receded, and by the end of the century it was largely confined to Egypt. The Fatimids had brought to Egypt not only Ismailism (although the great majority of their subjects remained Sunnites), they had also introduced higher governmental and economic standards and ushered in an era of economic and artistic expansion. In Cairo—renowned for its resplendent mosques and palaces, its fragrant gardens, the luxury of its court, the lavish displays of its bazaars, the wealth

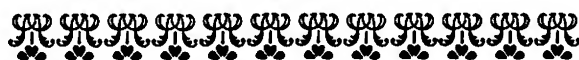
and prosperity of its citizens, and its well-policed streets—stood the famous House of Wisdom.

Founded in 1004 for training Ismaili missionaries, it was near the khalifal palace and had a library of two hundred thousand books. This remarkable academy was the heart of Ismaili missionary and conspiratorial activity. To it came Ismaili leaders from all Islam. And to it in 1078 came that extraordinary Iranian, Hasan Sabbah.

c. 1050-1090



Hasan Sabbah



TWO



HASAN'S CONVERSION [c. 1050-1078]

Born perhaps in the 1050s, Hasan was the son of a devout Shiite merchant, who because of Sunnite oppression was obliged to conceal his faith. He grew up in ancient Ray in the shadow of the Elburz Mountains. Although Ray was to be leveled by the Mongols in 1220 and is today eclipsed by younger Teheran five miles to the north, it had for millennia been a great city. The birthplace of Harun al-Rashid, it reputedly had in his time five thousand schools, ten thousand minarets, and fifteen hundred bathing establishments; it was hailed the wife of the world and the market of the universe. Although the conquering Seljuk Turks briefly made it their capital after the middle of the eleventh century, they soon abandoned it for Isfahan. Ray slipped into sectarian strife and racial rivalry between Turks, Arabs, and Iranians. It was in this atmosphere that until the age of seventeen the Iranian Hasan studied religion and sciences.

An apocryphal version of his education has his pious Shiite father take him to the Sunnite college of distant Nishapur. According to this tale, he and his schoolfellows—the future poet, mathematician, and astronomer Omar Khayyam (Tent-maker), and the future Grand Vizir Nizam al-Mulk (who, born about 1018, must have been mentally retarded still to be in school with Hasan)—became fast friends and solemnly swore that whichever one of them should attain fortune first would share it with the other two. Consequently, when Nizam al-Mulk (Harmony of the Realm) became Grand Vizir of the Turkish Sultan, he bestowed a subsidy on Omar and gave Hasan an important court post in Isfahan.

One day, when the Sultan asked Nizam for a general accounting, the Grand Vizir replied that it would require two years to complete. Thereupon, Hasan, apparently hoping to supplant his former schoolmate as Grand Vizir, offered to prepare it within forty days. He did so, but during his absence the report was deliberately disordered by Nizam. Thus, when Hasan presented it to the Sultan, its incoherence angered him. Hasan fled from his wrath. Perhaps the only truth in this story is that Nizam was Grand Vizir and gave a stipend to Omar Khayyam.

To return to Ray. Here Hasan at first repulsed the Ismailis' attempts to convert him, classing them with Greek philosophers. He was, however, impressed by their devotion and abstinence, abhorring, as he did, the consumption of wine as the wellhead of evil. Soon he was reading Ismaili literature, which so stirred him that when he became dangerously ill, he began to fear that he might die without knowing the Truth. When he recovered, he approached an Ismaili for further clarification of their doctrines. Convinced that Ismailism represented ultimate reality, he went to an Ismaili dai (Summoner to the Truth or propagandist, generally a person of

standing whose occupation was such as merchant or physician) and pledged allegiance to the Imam, the Fatimid Khalif. This was in 1071/1072, at which time Hasan was older than seventeen, but how much older is unknown.

When Attash, physician and chief dai of Irak and western Iran, came to Ray, he was so impressed by the tall, intense, somber convert with piercing eyes that he made him deputy dai. Four years later Hasan was ordered to go to Cairo for training at the House of Wisdom. He went first to Isfahan, the ancient city of roses, sojourned in Azerbaijan, perhaps the homeland of Zarathustra, and proceeded to Mayyafarikin, once the Christian Martyropolis because it possessed the relics of so many martyrs. Here in public debate he denied the right of Sunnite muftis (authoritative exponents of public law) to interpret religion, that being the prerogative of the Imam. As a result, he was expelled from the city. Continuing his journey, he passed beautiful Damascus with its shimmering minarets and encompassing verdure, the Pearl of the East, old as history, yet fresh as the breath of spring. Finally, in 1078 he reached the garden city of Cairo. His circuitous itinerary suggests that his journey to Cairo, where Ismaili policies throughout Islam were determined, might have had some purpose beside training at the House of Wisdom, possibly a request for aid in insurrection against the Abbasids and their Turkish overlords.



ISMAILI DOCTRINES

At this time Ismailism had existed for over three centuries and represented a broad spectrum of the discontented—anti-Arab natives, oppressed peasants, dissatisfied artisans, devout Muslims resenting the secularism and corruption of the age, and believers in the millennium. It was at one and the same time a Shiite sect combining Islamic with pre-Islamic Greek, Persian, Syrian, and Babylonian concepts; an Alid secret society dedicated to the overthrow of the Sunnite Abbasids; and a revolutionary social movement pledged to improve the lot of the depressed.

Nor did it limit itself to Muslims. Tending toward inter-confessionalism, it appealed to Jews, Christians, and Zarathustrans. Within the Abbasid Khalifate its missionary activities were perforce clandestine. Conversion entailed the transfer-

ence of allegiance from the Abbasid to the Fatimid Khalif. Thus, heresy and treason coincided.

To Ismailis, God is incomprehensible—beyond Man's sensual, reasoning, and imaginative powers and beyond time and space. Prayer cannot be addressed to such an attributeless being. But by a single command God created Universal Reason. This external manifestation of God is the actual Deity of the Ismailis,* to which they address their prayers and of which they seek to acquire knowledge, since knowledge of the Supreme Being is impossible.

Universal Reason created the Universal Soul, whose chief attribute is life. The Universal Soul in turn produced primal matter, from which the universe was formed. Finally, time and space became manifest. The combined action of these five forces generated movement.

As for Man, he appeared as a result of the Universal Soul's need to acquire perfect knowledge in order to attain the nature of Universal Reason. When it will have fulfilled this need, movement will cease, since it results from the tendency of the Soul toward Reason. Then Universal Reason and the entire Creation will re-enter the bosom of God.

Periodically, Universal Reason becomes incarnate in a prophet, reaching a higher stage with each succeeding incarnation in Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Muhammad, and Ismail or his son Muhammad.

Man, however, is not always prepared to receive the full message that God entrusts to His Prophet. Consequently, Muhammad limited his mission to establishing religious law and transmitted the remainder of God's Gospel to Ali to be communicated to Mankind as it became fit to acquire it.

* This might be borne in mind, since in this work the word "God" is frequently used in the Ismaili sense of Universal Reason.

Thus, Ali and his chosen scions, who are of the same substance as the Prophet, became repositories of Divine Truth and humanity's spiritual guides. They and they alone are qualified to interpret, elucidate, and apply the profundities of the Koran. Consequently, they and they alone are designed by God to be the spiritual and secular sovereigns of Islam, indeed, of the world—its Imams.

To the Ismailis the concept of the hereditary, omniscient, and infallible Imam is central. His authority replaces that of the Koran, Tradition, and Consensus, which the Sunnites accept as final. *Without the Imam as guide, a knowledge of God and consequently salvation are impossible.*

As a descendant of Ali and Muhammad the Imam is an emanation of God and rightful spiritual and temporal ruler of Islam. He cannot die until he has begotten his successor, to whom his divine element transmigrates. His power is unlimited, not bound even by the decisions of predecessive Imams.

To their Imams, the Ismailis are bound by an intense emotionalism, poignantly recalling the martyrdom of Ali, Husain, and other Imams and giving blind obedience to their current Imam. Some Ismailis attribute immortality to Ismail or to his son Muhammad, believing him to remain hidden until his return as Mahdi to usher in the millennium.

Since the Imam could not impart his knowledge to all his subjects directly, a priesthood was created to act as intermediary between him and his subjects. These priests were the dais or missionaries—carefully chosen men of dauntless devotion, exceptional education, high intelligence, commanding appearance, impeccable conduct, executive ability, and captivating courtesy—who enjoyed broad powers within their circumscriptions.

In the proselytizing process an Ismaili dai would generally begin by infusing doubt into the mind of the intended convert

in order to demonstrate the need for an authoritative teacher. Thus, he might ask why God had devoted six days to the creation of the world, whether He could not have done it in an hour, what were demons and what was their power, what were the torments of Hell, or why the first chapter of the Koran had seven verses. From these Koranic subjects he might proceed to more mundane matters and inquire why man has ten toes, ten fingers, and seven orifices in his head.

If the anticipated initiate requested answers to these questions, he would be apprised that the sublime verities of God's true religion were too priceless to be revealed to those who might maltreat it. Consequently, before disclosing God's mysteries, the dai would ask him to swear not to betray him or other Ismailis, to be truthful with him, not to join the foes of the Ismailis, and to continue the outward observance of Sunnite rites. If the prospective proselyte gave the pledge, he would be asked for an offering.

If this was also forthcoming, he was judged worthy to enter Ismaili ranks and would be admitted to the first degree, that is, he accepted the principle that the revelations of the Koran had a superior esoteric meaning, to understand which he required the help of a divinely authorized interpreter.

He entered the second degree when he was convinced of the error of Sunnite teachings and of the need to replace private judgment by an authoritative guide, that is, the Imam or his representative. The great majority of converts did not go beyond the second degree.

The third degree acquainted the disciple with the sacred significance of the number seven, informed him of the first seven Ismaili Imams and the esoteric names by which their intercession might be invoked. They were to be revered both for themselves and their sacred number, which was proof that Ismailism was the true religion.

In the fourth degree the postulant learned that God had sent seven prophets incarnating Reason to reveal His will. Each prophet had an associate (an Asas or Imam) to interpret his revelations. The prophet was thus the recipient of divine inspiration, the Asas or Imam his heir, executor, and interpreter who opened a cycle of seven Imams. The Prophet Adam had Seth as Asas, Noah had Shem, Abraham had Ismail, Moses had Aaron and later Joshua, Jesus had Peter, Muhammad had Ali, and finally the seventh Prophet, Ismail, or his son Muhammad had Abdullah ibn Maimun al-Kaddah (the Oculist), a shadowy but gifted Ismaili organizer of the late eighth or ninth century. The acceptance of a prophet after Muhammad, who had declared himself to be the final Prophet, absconded the initiate from Sunnism.

Indeed, the fifth degree rejected revealed religion and the observances based on the literal interpretation of the Koran, which, it was asserted, were for the ignorant masses, who could not understand Ismaili principles. The candidate's mathematical and numerological knowledge was deepened and its magical value stressed.

Only if the dai was convinced of the aspirant's discretion would he proceed to the sixth degree, for it instructed him to abandon overt Muslim observances, such as prayer, fasting, and pilgrimage, or to perform them only if expedience required. Such ordinances, the initiate was informed, had been promulgated by the prophets only to subordinate the masses to law and order. The dai then expounded the teachings of Plato, Aristotle, and Pythagoras and dwelt on the superiority of Greek philosophy over revealed religion. He urged his pupil to believe only what his reason accepted. This degree entitled the convert to become a dai.

Few attained the seventh degree, in which Aristotle's theory

of the eternity of matter was taught. Creation was not the fabrication of the non-existent but the introduction of movement, thus producing time and change.

Two further degrees were added to the mystic seven. The eighth taught that there are two Principles, the nameless First Cause and the Second Cause. The latter had been generated by a thought of the former, as the spoken word proceeds from the thought of a speaker. The Second Cause acts as intermediary between unknowable God and Man.

For the ninth degree Ismaili leaders studied the Greek philosophers' treatment of the soul, the heavens, and the intelligence. By then they had abandoned all faith and submitted to no authority other than their own reason.

From these teachings it will be seen that Ismailis believe that while the Koran has a literal outward meaning, it also has a superior cryptic inner sense, which the Imam and his agents alone can explain. While advanced Ismailis learned its esoteric significance, the uneducated were allowed to continue its literal interpretation. Indeed, they were instructed to observe all Sunnite practices. This was for self-protection, for Ismailis are taught that if threatened with harm, they may deny the Faith.

The Heaven of the educated Ismaili is not the traditional, voluptuous Muslim Paradise, but perfect wisdom, while their Hell is complete ignorance. Hell, however, is temporary, since the soul will return to Earth repeatedly until it has acquired wisdom.

From the aforesaid it will be seen that, in contrast to the egalitarian Sunnites, the Ismailis offered a hierarchic religion adjusted to the ability of the individual to absorb or adapt himself. It evolved a system enabling an elite to govern a multitude of communicants.

To encourage conversion, the dai would to a Shiite stress his sympathy for Ali and Husain, to a Sunnite praise the early Khalifs, to an Iranian condemn the Arabs for murdering Husain, to a Jew emphasize that the Mahdi was the Messiah, and to a Christian indicate that the Imam was actually the Holy Spirit.



SELJUK TURKS [950-1081]

Although their propaganda apparatus and their secret organization made a broad emotional, intellectual, social, economic, and political appeal, the power of the Fatimid Khalifs had declined. At the time of Hasan's arrival in Cairo in 1078 the actual authority of the reigning Khalif, Mustansir (Awaited), was wielded by his commanding general, Badr al-Jamali (Beautiful Full Moon), originally an Armenian mameluke (a slave bought as a child and reared in his owner's family to be a warrior).

In some manner Hasan incurred this mighty Armenian's displeasure and was incarcerated. Apparently a tower of the prison collapsed. A miracle or Hasan's magic? Whatever the cause, he was placed with a group of Latins on a ship leaving Alexandria for western waters. A tempest arose and the ship was driven to the Syrian strand. Hasan proceeded to Aleppo,

resumed his missionary endeavors, and reached the Ismaili headquarters in Isfahan in 1081.

At this time the Abbasid Khalifate was controlled by the Seljuk Turks. About 950, led by the eponymous Seljuk, these Turkomans had left the Kirghiz steppe, crossed the Jaxartes into gentler Transoxiana (which became known as Turkestan), and adopted Islam. Filtering across the Oxus, in 1040 they overthrew the regional ruler and made themselves masters of Khurasan. Moving westward, they crushed provincial potentates and ravaged the eastern confines of the Roman Empire. In 1055 they took Baghdad, unseated the Shiite Buyids, who had theretofore dominated the Sunnite Khalifs, and imposed their protection on the powerless Abbasid.

The Khalif named their chief, Tughril (Butcher), Sultan, his Right Arm, the Column of the Khalifate, and Lord of East and West. Tughril established his dominion from the Oxus to the Euphrates and from the Caspian to the Persian Gulf. In the northern parts of this area not only Seljuks, but also wilder Turkoman tribes drove out many Iranian peasants and settled the land, transforming cultivated fields into pastures.

As master of the Abbasid Khalifate, Tughril impressed on it a military and political unity that it had not known since the ninth century. Moreover, being ardent Sunnites, the Seljuk Turks also sought to impose religious unity. Thus, their conquest revived the Sunnite cause and portended dire days for Shiites.

In 1063 Tughril was succeeded by his long-mustachioed nephew Alp Arslan (Fearless Lion). Eight years later Alp Arslan met the gallant Roman Emperor Romanus IV on the tragic field of Manzikert. Deserted by commanders in collusion with corrupt bureaucrats, who resented his curtailment of their peculations, the Emperor was surrounded, wounded, and captured. The following day, chained, wearing servile rings in his ears, and clad as a simple soldier, he was led before the

triumphant Turk and hurled to the ground. Alp Arslan placed his foot on the neck of the prostrate monarch. After this traditional insult to the majesty of the antique state founded on the left bank of the Tiber over eighteen centuries earlier, Alp Arslan treated his chivalrous adversary with the honor due his unblemished valor and exalted rank, and made peace with him. But the liberated Emperor was murdered by the Byzantine bureaucrats and the treaty was repudiated. A large part of Anatolia fell to the Turks, thus irreparably enfeebling the Empire. It lingered on for four centuries but never recovered.

Meanwhile, in 1072 Alp Arslan was assassinated by a captive. He was succeeded by his eighteen-year-old son Malik Shah, who retained the famous Iranian Grand Vizir Nizam al-Mulk, Hasan's supposititious schoolfellow. Nizam, a native of Khurasan and in 1081 already past sixty, was the actual ruler of the Seljuk domain. Indeed, combined with Turkish power, this great Persian's wisdom and administrative ability restored order, unity, and prosperity to the Abbasid Khalifate. Devout and cultured, Nizam founded many pious institutions, notably schools, undertook extensive public works, inaugurated a calendar reform, and rendered the pilgrimage to Mecca both safe and less expensive.

Yet there was discontent in the land. As a result of their cultural ascendancy, Persians had largely displaced Arabs as the dominating force of the Abbasid Khalifate, and it was perhaps natural that they should resent subjection to the alien and often still uncouth sons of Turkestan. Moreover, the distribution of large estates to Seljuk officers and the heavy taxes that these feudatories imposed led to the subjection, impoverishment, and indignation of the modest husbandmen. Similarly, in urban centers the influx of dispossessed peasants and the dislocations of industry and commerce had multiplied the number of those in distress. At this time Sunnism seems not to have offered great emotional or intellectual consolation.



HASAN'S NEW PROPAGANDA [1081-1090]

This consolation was to be provided by Hasan and his New Propaganda. When he reported to the Ismaili center in Isfahan in 1081, he learned that Attash was in hiding. It would appear that in his absence Hasan acted as Ismaili leader in Iran. Hasan was not only a visionary, he was also a careful planner and a man of action, ascetic, and apparently avid for power. He distrusted the multitude and placed his faith in an elite leadership. Charismatic, he could inspire blind devotion and obedience.

He ranged far and wide, ultimately concentrating on the area south of the Caspian. Of his trials and triumphs, his pleas and exhortations, his cabals and escapes in the 1080s little is known. It would seem, however, that his New Propaganda had a greater emotional content than the older Ismaili teachings, apparently appealing to the magical, apocalyptic, chili-

astic notions of the poor, the oppressed, the desperate, and the hopeless. Above all, he insisted on the inability of the human intellect to attain a knowledge of God and salvation without the guidance of the Imam or his representatives and on the importance of blind obedience to their divinely inspired commands.

There is extant a paraphrase of his rejection of individual judgment in matters of religion, of which the following is a brief restatement:

A man may claim to know God through reason without a teacher or he may believe that, despite reason and speculation, he cannot know God without the guidance of a true teacher. If he thinks that reason alone suffices, he cannot prefer his own reasoning to another's, for his very denial of another's conclusions is teaching and proves the need of a teacher. Accepting, then, the need of a teacher, does any teacher suffice?

Whoever maintains that any teacher suffices cannot reject his opponent's teacher. If he does, he admits the need of a true teacher.

Indeed, both reason and a true teacher are required. Through reason we realize the need for the authoritative Imam to lead us to a knowledge of God.

Unity is an indication of the true religion; diversity of the false. And unity stems from the acceptance of the authority of the Imam, while the multiplicity of sects derives from the use of individual judgment.⁴

Thus, stressing the importance of unthinking obedience to the Imam and consequently to himself, the *hujja* (the proof or link to the Imam), Hasan continued to work for the Ismaili cause. He and his dais, often disguised as peddlers, beggars, or Sufi monks, traversed plains, deserts, rivers, and mountains,

visited forts, towns, castles, and hamlets, converted Shiites and Sunnites, fortified the convictions of Ismailis, planned and organized the future seizure of strongholds, rallied Iranian, Iraqi, and Syrian Ismailis, and assailed the oppression of Abbasids and Turks, whose overthrow they plotted.

Evading arrest, Hasan preached to the masses, but in all likelihood directed his main appeal to a chosen few and enlisted a following intensely loyal to himself. Impressed by his intellect, conviction, and asceticism, fired by his fervor, overcome by his magnetism, many broke completely with their previous existence and abandoned wives, children, and homes to follow him. Thereafter they devoted their lives to him, indeed, belonged to him. Beside this elite, however, it would appear that most of his converts were persons of little education—mountaineers, peasants, artisans, and the urban poor. Possibly Hasan's disparagement of the use of individual reason repelled the educated. At all events, the intellectual superiority that had previously characterized the Ismailis receded during the twelfth century.

Having by his decade of labor given the Ismaili cause a potent impulsion and having organized the vague hopes, fury, and beliefs of the malcontents into a revolutionary movement, Hasan determined to establish his center of power in the Elburz Mountains south of the Caspian. Among the devoted disciples, who for years had shared his journeys, struggles, and privations, had courted death or incarceration, had perhaps whitened or grown ill in his service, there must have been a sense of expectation and exhilaration, a feeling that the supreme moment was at hand. After years of preparation the first decisive blow against Turk and Abbasid was at last to be struck.

THREE



The Master



1090–1124



ALAMUT [1090–1092]

In the bleak, melancholy, almost lunar Elburz Mountains there is a remote valley enclosed by steep slopes. Through it flows the Alamut River. A stream, the Kasir, issues into it from the north. At the head of this tributary's vale, about two hours' walk from the Alamut, rises a rocky gray eminence with sheer sides. It is 600 feet high, 450 feet long, and 30 to 125 feet wide, and is partly encompassed by the towering Elburz range. Other than a narrow neck to a lava monticle between it and the Elburz, it has no junction with the circumjacent landscape. On this unassailable site, often circled by eagles and reached by almost perpendicular steps crudely hacked out of the rock, stood an impregnable castle, to which centuries before an eagle was believed to have guided its builder—Alamut (Eagle's Guidance).

It was this castle in a wild panorama of denuded rocks and

somber forests that Hasan determined to transform into the heart of Iranian Ismailism. But the lord of the castle, an Alid,* held the fortress in fief from the Sultan Malik Shah. Hasan sent dais to convert the garrison, and in September 1090 was secretly admitted to the castle. He did not at first reveal his presence to the Alid, but as the days passed the latter noticed that he was no longer obeyed, that there was another master at Alamut. Hasan came forward, gave the now powerless castellan leave to withdraw, and in payment for the castle presented him with a draft for three thousand gold dinars payable by the Governor of Damghan, Muzafar Mustaufi, a secret convert. The deposed lord of Alamut seems to have doubted whether so important a personage would honor the note of an obscure sectary, but when he presented it, he was amazed to see the Governor reverently kiss the document and make immediate payment.

Hasan took up residence in the tower of Alamut. His quarters were a bedroom and a library. As almost five centuries earlier the Prophet had fled to Medina to use it as a base for ultimate conquest, Hasan planned to employ Alamut and strongholds in other marginal areas garrisoned by the elite of his order to converge on, convert, and conquer the Sunnite Khalifate. Such were the problems of this titanic undertaking that it is said that only four times during his residence at Alamut did he find time to emerge from his modest lodgings into the open air.

His immediate concerns, however, were to refortify Alamut, provide for its food and water supply, construct cisterns and storerooms for provisions, irrigate the fields in the valley, convert the inhabitants of the environs, acquire adjacent castles, erect forts at strategic points, institute economic and

* A descendant of Ali by a woman other than Fatima.



The Rock of Alamut. [*Photograph by Dr. Laurence Lockhart, in whose Famous Cities of Iran (London, 1939) it appears*]

social reforms, unite the Ismailis by bonds of fraternity, and make every Ismaili feel himself a responsible member of the community and inseparable from it.

He had barely undertaken these tasks when an emir of the Sultan advanced. Since the stronghold could not be taken by storm, the emir besieged it, devastated the countryside, and butchered the Ismaili converts. Within Alamut, the men were reduced to famine and determined to abandon the castle. Hasan informed them that he had been in telepathic communion with the Imam Mustansir, who had assured him of good fortune. The starving garrison held out and the siege was broken.

Then, throughout the region Hasan's alert, affable, eloquent, lucid dais brought hardy villagers within the Ismaili fold, not markedly changing their beliefs, but assuring them that obedience to Hasan and through him to the sacred Imam sufficed for their salvation. Moreover, the Master not only erected forts at key points, but by proselytism or force gained control of castles in the vicinity, thus consolidating his power base.

In the interim his dais continued their missionary labors in the barren highlands of distant Kuhistan and in the mountains between Fars and Khuzistan. In the former region the Ismailis acquired a series of towns and castles, and in the latter a number of strongholds, thereby establishing two other important areas of Ismaili power.

In 1092 the Sultan sent another expedition against Alamut. The Master had only seventy men, who held off the attackers until, reinforced by a few hundred Ismailis from the area, they routed the besiegers in a nocturnal assault on their camp.



FIDAIIS

Lacking wealth and a trained army, the prerequisites for war, what weapons did the Master possess thus to challenge the mightiest Muslim monarch in the world?

In Ismailism he held not only the keys to Heaven, adjusted to open gates according to the individual's needs and desires, but also the promise of hidden powers that could be acquired by those initiated into Ismaili mysteries.

In Ismailism he also had a secret organization seasoned by over three centuries of conspiratorial activity. Throughout the Seljuk dominions were devout Ismailis in every walk of life, from lowly peasant to lordly courtier, ready to act for the cause.

Above all, he had an elite hierarchy. It comprised the three chief dais of Kuhistan, Khuzistan, and Syria, a cadre of dais or master missionaries trained for many functions, and partly initiated fellows.



An eighteenth-century print of Hasan Sabbah, assertedly made from descriptions of travelers who had seen him.

To these he added the fidais (devotees), whose chief purpose was to assassinate the foes of the faith and who were initiated only sufficiently to ensure blind obedience.* Below the fidais were the novices and lay brothers.

Assassination for politico-religious purposes in Islam reached back almost to its origin. Ali himself had been murdered by a Kharijite sectary in 661. Hasan's contribution to the art of assassination was that by careful selection, training, and inspiration he developed the practice into a sacred ritual and the prime weapon of a small state waging war against a great power. Thus, Alamut became the greatest training center of fanatical politico-religious assassins that the world has known.

Women, children, the aged, and the infirm were expelled from Alamut, and except for hierarchs, scholars, and other specialists, it came to be inhabited chiefly by vigorous, young fidais. Such was the Master's fame and such the Ismailis' zeal that there was ever an excess of applicants for admission to the ranks of the fidais, although it was known that their training would be stern and rigorous and that their lives would in all likelihood end early and in torture.

These prospective young martyrs must have been imbued by a spirit similar to that of those early Christians who confronted death and torture in the name of Christ with equanimity, if not delight, or to that of the Japanese kamikaze pilots who in the twentieth century willingly snuffed out their lives in the service of their Emperor. It is not known to what extent the doctrine of using the body to purify the soul was current at this time, but it would appear that the young fidais expected eternal bliss to be the reward of their sacrifice. This

* Hodgson questions the existence of the fidais as a special degree at this time, indicating that any able communicant might be employed for assassination.⁵

belief seems to have been widespread. It is recounted that when a fidai's mother heard that her son had been killed on a murder mission, she rejoiced and bedecked herself in gay raiment; when he returned alive, she enrobed mourning attire.

In seeking to understand the stoic abnegation of the fidais, it is perhaps important to remember that they were chosen with circumspection, not only for strength of mind and body but also for that of character, and were expelled at the slightest sign of weakness or levity, such as playing the flute. Moreover, they entered Alamut at a young and impressionable age, some as young as twelve, and believed themselves to be under divine guidance. Indeed, beside their instruction in weaponry, particularly in the use of the dagger, in disguises, in languages, and in court etiquette, they were carefully indoctrinated. They were taught that revealed religion was for the masses, that the only truth came from the Imam, and that as they acquired more of his eternal knowledge, they would gain hidden powers. With the past discredited and the future in their teachers' hands, they came to view the world as their teachers desired. Their dependence on them was enhanced by secret oaths, mysterious rites, and isolation from the outside world. Above all, there was implanted in their minds the importance of blind obedience to the Master, the Proof of the Imam.

A more mundane explanation of the fidais' motivation is given by Marco Polo, who was in the vicinity of Alamut in 1273. According to his account, taking Muhammad's description of Heaven as his model, Hasan enclosed a valley with walls, erected a powerful fort at its entrance to bar possible intruders, transformed it into a beautiful garden filled with divers fruits, built elegant gilded palaces and pavilions, installed conduits flowing with wine, milk, honey, and water, and introduced beautiful damsels, who could sing sweetly,

dance charmingly, play various instruments, and dally alluringly.

The Master, the memoirs continue, would lull one or more of his fidais to sleep with a potion and transport them unconscious to this Elysian garden. When they awoke and made intimate acquaintance with its delightful denizens, the generally simple mountain lads believed themselves veritably in Paradise. In due course another potion was administered and under its influence the fidai would be returned to Alamut. When he regained consciousness he would tell his comrades of Heaven and instill in them the desire to go there. He himself remained the captive of his own memory, and there was no peril he would not confront and no disguise he would not assume in order to return to the blissful abode.

Generally, according to Marco Polo, after a sojourn in the celestial garden the Master would entrust the fidai with a murder mission, assuring him that he would re-enter Paradise if he did not survive and thus transform his recent transient joy into perpetual pleasure.

Marco Polo further relates that the Master would send his fidais on trial killings in the Alamut area, where they could be observed by his spies. Thus, when an important personage was to be assassinated, he could send his most proficient dagger man.

Others place the Master's garden of pleasure on a tongue of Alamut, while still others question its existence, indicating that with its short, torrid summers and long, frigid winters the Alamut area was hardly a propitious site for a terrestrial paradise.

At all events, it was widely believed that the fidais were given hashish* to stupefy them, stimulate them, or even to

* Known also as Indian hemp, hashish was relatively rare in Persia at this time. Indeed, some believe that only the Ismailis knew

create a hallucinatory paradise for them. They came to be called hashish-users, of which the word "Assassins" is a corruption. They may have been called hashish-users because of their alleged consumption of the drug or merely as a term of opprobrium.

Another theory is that the vocable "Assassin" is derived from "Asas" (foundation), a name applied to the Imam who is the associate of a prophet. Thus, Asasi might connote follower of the Asas as Ismaili means adherent of Ismail.⁶ A further supposition is that "Assassin" is a corruption of the word for follower of Hasan.⁷ But whatever its origin, the term "assassin" imperceptibly acquired its present general meaning.

its secrets. However that might be, a small amount of the drug apparently stimulates the brain and the nervous system, while a large dose intoxicates to the point of inspiring reckless courage. An even greater quantity might transform a fanatic into a homicidal maniac. Prolonged consumption, however, leads to mental and physical apathy.



NIZAM AL-MULK [1092]

Without doubt oblivious of this contribution to Occidental vocabularies, the Master is said, perhaps erroneously, to have received a letter from the Sultan Malik Shah reproaching him for having rebelled, vilified the Khalifs, devised a new religion, enticed people into it by devious means, and corrupted simple mountain folk to plunge poniards into innocent people. Unless he desisted, the missive warned, it might be necessary to send troops against him.

In his reputed reply the Master of Alamut denied that he had founded a new religion, asserted that he adhered to the gospel of Muhammad (on whom he invoked heavenly peace and blessings), and declared that the affairs of this world meant little to him, his life being dedicated to the True Faith. He insisted, however, that the scions of the Prophet rather than those of Abbas should occupy the khalifal office and

wondered how the Sultan could achieve salvation if he did not take steps to protect Islam from the Abbasid evil. Indeed, the Abbasids had poisoned the Sultan's mind against him and prevented his attending the sultanic court. If Malik Shah desired religious and temporal peace, he must crush the Abbasids.

He wrote that he would never commit an act displeasing the Sultan. On the contrary, he had occupied Alamut in order to be of assistance. After he had dealt with his foes, he would enter sultanic service and devote himself to the amelioration of material conditions and the spiritual edification of the Sultan. As for the possibility of the dispatch of troops against Alamut, its safety was in God's hands. Hasan advised the Sultan not to consult Nizam al-Mulk regarding his course toward him (Hasan) because of the Grand Vizir's hostility to him. He went on to condemn the conduct of Nizam's officials, accused Nizam of corruption, nepotism, and extravagant building, and insisted that in the general confusion and desperation it was natural for subjects to rise against their oppressors.⁸

If this document is authentic, it would seem that Hasan was seeking to drive wedges between the Sultan, the Khalif, and the Grand Vizir. In fact, he probably realized that Malik Shah's great Persian minister, who had sternly suppressed other rebellions, would soon overwhelm him, was perhaps already preparing an expedition against Alamut for the spring of 1093 after the snows had melted.

In the interim, during the sacred month of Ramadan 1092, when practicing Mohammadans fast from dawn to sunset, Nizam was accompanying Malik Shah on a journey to Baghdad. The sultanic caravan had stopped at the village of Sahna for the night. In the evening the ailing Nizam, now about seventy-four, had been with the Sultan. He was being conveyed to the tent of his harem by litter when an Assassin,

disguised as a holy man with a petition, stepped forward and stabbed him. So died the old man who for thirty years had beneficently administered the Seljuk empire, suppressed pretenders and other insurgents, expanded Seljuk authority from the Chinese confines to the Red Sea, established order, founded schools, encouraged learning, ensured prosperity, provided for the poor, and who, had he lived, would probably have crushed the Assassins' insurrection.

The Assassin had tripped over tent cords and been slain by Nizam's agitated servants. Malik Shah succeeded in calming the Vizir's bereft entourage and continued on to Baghdad, whither he intended to transfer his capital. He asked the Khalif to abdicate in favor of their minor grandson. Shocked by this extraordinary demand, the Shadow of God requested a few days' delay to reach a decision. Before the deferment had elapsed, Malik Shah died (November 1092), assertedly from a fever contracted while hunting, probably from poison.

Although it was rumored that the murder of Nizam was the work of the Assassins in collaboration with courtiers hostile to him, it is not known whether the Assassins were involved in Malik Shah's demise. Militating against the assumption of their participation is the fact that in ritual fashion they almost invariably murdered in public and with a dagger consecrated by the Master.

At all events, Malik Shah's death terminated, at least temporarily, Seljuk operations against the Assassins of Alamut and Kuhistan. Indeed, together with the assassination of Nizam, it marked the end of the fleeting apogee of Seljuk rule that had coincided with Nizam's incumbency. A child became Sultan. Thus, two years after taking Alamut, the Master saw the Seljuk realm reduced to dynastic impotence.



NIZAR [1094-1095]

Before continuing the account of the Master's struggle to overthrow Seljuk and Abbasid, it seems appropriate to move ahead to the year 1094, when the Fatimid Imam-Khalif Mustansir died in Cairo. The Grand Vizir Afdal (son of the recently deceased Badr) elevated Mustansir's young son Mustali (Exalted of God), who was his son-in-law. The eldest son and designated heir to the Imamate, Nizar, fled to Alexandria and assumed the Khalifate. Defeated by Afdal (1095), he and his sons were imprisoned and apparently murdered. It was reported that his grandson or posthumous son was spirited out of Egypt and delivered to Hasan, who acknowledged him as Imam. In remaining true to Nizar, the Master was treading in the steps of the first Ismailis, who had also kept faith with the prince whom they considered the legitimate heir to the Imamate.

Thus, Hasan founded an Ismaili subsect, the Nizaris.* Iranian Ismailis and many Iraqi and Syrian Ismailis became Nizaris. And many converts were made. There may have been other factors in what amounted to a Persian declaration of independence of the Fatimid Imams—possibly Hasan's reluctance to accept an actual overlord, the aversion of Persian leaders to the all-powerful Afdal and his Turkish soldiery, and perhaps an incompatibility between the zealous Iranian Ismailis, living among hostile Sunnites, and the Egyptian Ismailis, softened by the security of a protective government.

* In conformity with Occidental usage the term "Assassins" is employed in this book as synonymous with Nizaris. It should be noted, however, that the word "Assassins" was originally applied by the Crusaders only to the Syrian Nizaris or Ismailis (for the Nizaris were and still are Ismailis).



STRUGGLE AGAINST SELJUKS [1092-1109]

To return to the Master's war against Seljuk and Abbasid, whose purpose seems to have been to supplant the Seljuk Sultan and Abbasid Khalif by himself and a visible or invisible Assassin Iman. In this almost incredibly bold bid for power, whose strategic outline is hidden by the mists of ages, he pursued a four-pronged policy of conversion, alliance, assassination, and military action.

It has been noted that conversion could be on many levels. On the lowest it would in practice involve little more than the promise of obedience to the Master. Apparently, not even conversion was always insisted upon. In the Alamut area and elsewhere the Master may occasionally have been satisfied with the alliance of castellans who retained their own faith.

As for the policy of assassination, it has been seen that the central Seljuk authority had to a large extent been subverted

by the murders of Nizam and Malik Shah. As a result, power was to a greater degree than before dispersed among regional rulers. Generally, it sufficed to assassinate the suzerain to paralyze the Sunni community. Thus, the death of Malik Shah had terminated the military operations against Alamut and in Kuhistan. The same pattern prevailed on a local and provincial basis, where the murder of a pivotal personage could cripple the Sunnites. Apart from the fact that it would have been folly to engage the numerically superior Sunnites in pitched battle, the Master's policy of assassination was a relatively bloodless way of waging war. One man—a potentate, a general, a governor, or an important minister—was killed instead of many in battle.

Only as a last resort would the Assassins engage in military operations and then generally on a small scale, such as the capture of a castle or the seizure of a town from within. It would seem that their strategy was to acquire mountain castles, control the highlands, and from there dominate the plains.

Meanwhile, after the death of Malik Shah the Seljuks had lapsed into successional strife. Regional rulers, Seljuks and others, arose in peripheral areas, and effective central Seljuk control receded to western Iran and Irak.

The Assassins redoubled their efforts, seizing strongholds by force or conversion, notably in the Elburz region, in Kuhistan, and in the mountains between Fars and Khuzistan. They spread their propaganda among Seljuk soldiers, took two forts near Isfahan, collected taxes intended for the Seljuks, and even intervened in Seljuk successional struggles, supporting one contender with five thousand men.

This policy of conversion, alliance, and hostilities was constantly supported by assassination, designed either to prevent attack or to preserve Seljuk disunity, wherein lay the Master's

hope of attaining supreme sovereignty. Thus, the murder of a general on the eve of a battle often determined its course, the killing of a key figure halted a project, or the assassination of an able man prevented the restoration of order and unity. Often the lord of Alamut could channel the course of history simply by a mysteriously placed message, significantly trans-fixed by a dagger. Such was the terror that he inspired in Iran, Irak, and Syria that the recipient would frequently alter his plans to suit him.

Invisible and ubiquitous, fidais infiltrated the retinues of potentates and infused apprehension and sleepless dread into Seljuk courts. Not knowing whence the blow might fall and demoralized by the knowledge that they had to do with fanatics who did not fear death, even welcomed it, rulers often suspected everybody. Officers distrusted their men and rarely left their quarters unless armed and mailed. But Hasan's victims were not exclusively military and political figures. Sunnite scholars, religious leaders, and municipal authorities who castigated Assassin teachings were also felled by Assassins' knives. Some were simply intimidated into silence.

The fame and the position of power that Nizam al-Mulk had established ensured office for his progeny under Seljuks and Abbasids for over a half-century. They were thus the targets of the Assassins' daggers.

In October 1100 an emir was stabbed to death by an Assassin in the Ray residence of Nizam's son Fakhr al-Mulk (Glory of the Realm). When Fakhr reproached the Assassin for besmirching his home and the deference owing him, the Assassin contemptuously retorted that no respect was due him and announced that six more persons would soon be slain. In response to Fakhr's inquiry whether he was among them, the Assassin rejoined that he was too insignificant for the Assassins to soil their poniards with his blood. Torture was applied to

the contumelious young man to force him to reveal the names of the six nominees for murder. It was without avail and he was put to death.⁹

Six years later, in September 1106, in Nishapur, Fakhr, now Grand Vizir of Khurasan, was approached by an Assassin disguised as a beggar, who gave him a petition. While he was reading it, the Assassin stabbed him to death. Tortured to name his confederates, he denounced twelve loyal courtiers and officers. They were executed. Afterward it was learned that they were innocent. Thus, with a single dagger thrust the fidai had sent thirteen men to the grave.

In November 1109 Ahmad, another son of Nizam and Grand Vizir of the Sultan, was crossing the Tigris at Baghdad to attend services at the Great Mosque when a boat suddenly rammed his craft. An Assassin jumped aboard and plunged a knife into his neck, paralyzing him. The fidai was captured and named as confederates some probably guiltless persons, who were executed with him. Assassins also made several unsuccessful attempts to kill the Sultan Muhammad Tapar.

Without doubt many murders committed by others were attributed to the Assassins. Sunnite feeling against them rose and they were subjected to frequent attacks and massacres. In Isfahan wild rumors about them circulated. Missing persons were thought to have been murdered by them. It was reported that they lured or forced Sunnites to a house at the end of a long dark lane, threw them headfirst into a dry well connected with the house's cellar, and tortured, crucified, and butchered them. Numerous cadavers were alleged to have been found in the cavernous cellars of this house of horrors and two or three victims still breathing. Reacting to such reports, the Sunnites of Isfahan slaughtered many Assassins, forcing some to leap into a flaming trench.¹⁰



STALEMATE [1105-1118]

It is not possible to trace the Master's actual course in his unprecedented and farflung bid for power. Even his contemporaries seem not to have understood his policy and to have viewed him and his followers as men of evil, whose activities, especially their assassinations, were designed to enhance the fear, insecurity, and turmoil of the period. No doubt Hasan strove to prolong and profit from the confusion resulting from the Seljuks' failure to create a unitary state, for the rivalry of the Seljuk princes, atabegs (regents for Seljuk minors and thus regional rulers), and emirs (who, though originally generals and frequently governors, often became provincial potentates) enfeebled the foe. Yet neither Seljuk disunity nor Assassin strength sufficed to enable the lord of Alamut to gain control of the Abbasid Khalifate.

Indeed, by 1105 the Sultan Muhammad Tapar, supported

by his younger brother Sanjar, ruler of Khurasan, was sufficiently strong to undertake major expeditions against the Assassins and to drive them from many of their strongholds. In the Zagros Mountains the four Jewish congregations living among the Assassins joined them in resisting the Sunnites.

Needless to say, the Seljuks made repeated attempts to take Alamut, the Assassin nerve center. Thanks to its impregnable position, direct assault was difficult. The Seljuks consequently resorted mainly to investment, taking the surrounding Assassin forts and destroying crops and fruit trees, seeking thus to starve the Assassins into submission.

It was on the occasion of a siege about 1108 that Hasan sent his wife and daughters to another castle, where they were to earn their keep by spinning. He never saw them again, nor did he thereafter permit women to enter his castle. Enveloped in mystery and silence, Alamut seemed a legend to the world outside. Yet it was here, in his modest tower quarters, that the ascetic Master administered the scattered Assassin empire within the Seljuk realm, directed military operations, elaborated the dogmata of the New Propaganda, prescribed missionary activities, determined alliances, ordained assassinations.

And here he supervised the stern training of his ardent young fidais. Coarsely attired, consuming simple fare, abjuring wine under penalty of death, devoting their lives to the acquisition of the physical and intellectual skills needed for the accomplishment of their missions, these devotees were intensely loyal to the Master.

Within his hierarchy, however, was an Alid, Zaid, who apparently fretted that he had not obtained a more important post and who seems to have aspired to undo and overthrow the Master. Among the fidais were Hasan's two sons. He accorded them no special privileges and subjected them to the iron discipline of an order that made no exceptions for birth.

Zaid, however, appears to have encouraged the older son, Husain, to regard himself as his father's successor. To what extent he involved him in a conspiracy is impossible to discern. At all events, one morning the chief dai of Kuhistan, who was at Alamut reporting to the Master, was found strangled in his room. However natural assassination might seem to a fraternal order dedicated to it, the murder of one of their own profoundly shocked the Alamutines. What transpired in the Master's library is unknown, but apparently he concluded, perhaps erroneously, that his son Husain was one of the murderers. Husain was put to death.

A year later Zaid's part in the plot was discovered and he too was executed. Meanwhile, the Master's adolescent younger son had found a goatskin of wine in the castle and had imbibed. He was also deprived of life.

What had passed through the heart of the hard man of Alamut in condemning his sons to death? Was he convinced of their guilt and simply applying the law? Or was he deliberately extirpating his offspring to prevent the establishment of a dynasty with its inevitable reversion to mediocrity? Whatever may have been his motives, his followers saw in him a superman detached from mundane matters and dedicated exclusively to his mission. Obedience to him (and thus to the Imam) sufficed for happiness in this world and the next.

The Patriarch of Constantinople sent envoys to Alamut. They were deeply impressed by Hasan and reported:

His natural dignity, his distinguished manner, his smile, which is always courteous and pleasant but never familiar or casual, the grace of his attitudes, the striking firmness of his movements, all combine to produce an undeniable superiority. This is fundamentally the result of his great personality, which is magnetic in its domination. There is no pride or arrogance; he emanates calm and good will.¹¹



The Rock of Shahdiz, about four miles from Isfahan, which may be seen in the background. In a castle on this rock eighty Assassins held out against the Turks until overwhelmed. Their leader was later flayed alive in Isfahan. [*Photograph by Dr. Caro O. Minasian*]

Although Hasan was in practice absolute sovereign of the Assassins, he had failed in his bold bid to supplant Seljuk and Abbasid. After 1105 he was on the defensive, retaining what he could of his dispersed state within a state.

Far to the south, near Isfahan, Ahmad, son of the titular Assassin leader Attash, held out with about eighty men in what remained standing of the largely demolished fortress Shahdiz. To give the impression that they were numerous, they placed weapons on the walls. But doom could no longer be averted. Ahmad's wife bedecked herself in her jewelry and leaped over the wall to death. Most of the defenders died

fighting. No such easy end awaited Ahmad, who in 1107 was marched through Isfahan's streets, mocked, pelted with filth, and flayed alive.

Another source has Attash himself captured, paraded through Isfahan amid the taunts of the populace, and crucified. While he was hanging on the cross, an Isfahani asked him how it was that with his astrological knowledge he had not precluded his fate. He is said to have replied that his horoscope had, in fact, indicated that he would traverse the streets of Isfahan with ceremony but he had not realized that it would be in such a manner.

Soon after, the Seljuks took the Assassins' strongholds in the Fars-Khuzistan highlands. Hoping to parallel their victories in the south with an even greater one in the north, for eight years they systematically destroyed the crops of the Alamut area. By 1117 the Assassins in the castles of Alamut and Lamasar had been reduced to dire straits. They were besieged and mangonels were reared against them. Famished and wearied by bombardment, the Assassins were near exhaustion. Their days seemed numbered. Then, in April 1118, a messenger reached the Seljuks and announced the death of the Sultan Muhammad Tapar. The emirs broke camp and hastened to the side of the new master.



SANJAR [1118–1124]

The new master—after brief internecine hostilities—was Sanjar, the handsome, brunet, mustached, thirty-two-year-old son of Malik Shah. Kind, just, gentle, affable, valorous, responsible, and compassionate, he had for years competently governed Khurasan. It was hoped that he would restore order and unity. But the empire to which he succeeded had been crippled by the establishment of regional Seljuk or other dynasts, who often acknowledged only the nominal authority of the central government. Then there were the Assassins, who, though with diminished holdings, still formed a widely disseminated hostile state within his domains. He dispatched troops against them in Kuhistan and himself moved against Alamut with a strong force.

He had not advanced very far when one night he awoke in his tent to find a dagger projecting from the ground. It had



This sixteenth-century Persian manuscript miniature from the *Treasury of Mysteries* by the romantic poet Nizami (c. 1135–1203) shows the Sultan Sanjar being accosted by an old woman, who requests redress for an injustice committed by one of his soldiers and intimates that if the Sultan could not control his own warriors, there was no point in his conquering foreign peoples. Sanjar's finger at his mouth is supposed to show his amazement. [*Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Alexander Smith Cochran, 1913*]

obviously been placed there by a member of his household. Around its hilt was a message from the lord of Alamut. It offered peace, indicating that the poniard might easily have been plunged into his breast. Shocked by the obvious connivance of one of his household, Sanjar decided to negotiate.

Some time later, we may imagine, the handsome young fidais were arrayed in a courtyard of Alamut, their red boots, belts, and turbans contrasting with their white tunics. Here their pale, now white-bearded Master received the Sultan's emissaries. Apparently they demanded his submission to Khalif and Sultan. To demonstrate his power, he nodded to a young fidai, who immediately drew his knife, slit his throat, and fell dying at the feet of the horrified envoys, blood staining his white tunic. Then the Master signaled to a fidai on the parapet who unhesitatingly hurled himself to death hundreds of feet below. Turning to the ambassadors, Hasan told them to report to the Sultan that he had sixty thousand men prepared to obey him with equal submission.

Peace was made by compromise. The Master agreed not to proselytize in the Sultan's domain and not to strengthen Assassin strongholds, while the Sultan withdrew his troops from Assassin territory and made financial concessions.

Whatever sacrifices Sanjar had made, they seem to have been expedient. The Assassins' conspiratorial network at regional courts ceased to work against him, possibly even functioned in his favor. Although Sunnite religious leaders condemned his pact with the hated Alamutine, Sanjar undoubtedly enjoyed greater authority within the Seljuk realm and was thus able to exert his power on his northern and eastern confines.

As for the lord of Alamut, the treaty revealed that he had relinquished the hope of supplanting Seljuk and Abbasid and was content to consolidate his state. Assassinism had spent

itself against traditional forces and had ceased to be revolutionary.

In 1121 Afdal, the Egyptian Vizir whose deeds a generation earlier had precipitated the separation of Nizaris from Fatimids, was assailed by three men as he was riding near the sword cutlers' bazaar and stabbed to death. The killers were dispatched by his guards. Whether it was the work of the Fatimid Khalif Amir or of the Assassins is still disputed.

At all events, his death was followed by abortive negotiations between the Master and Cairo to restore Fatimid-Assassin relations. Soon the Fatimid Khalif and his Grand Vizir Mamun began to fear that their assassinations might form part of the Alamutine's plan for settlement. They instituted extraordinary measures to prevent the entry of Assassins into Egypt and the apprehension of those already there.

In May 1124 the Master, who is said to have regularly imbibed a concoction of herbs, almonds, and walnuts to stimulate brain and body, sensed the approach of death. He sent for Buzurg Umid. Umid had been a handsome young page in a hostile Elburz castle whom Hasan had converted before taking Alamut. In 1101 Umid had taken the Castle of Lamasar at the entrance of the Alamut Valley and had slaughtered all the defenders, who had accepted and then rejected Assassinism. He had become master of the castle, refortified it, built a palace and gardens, and provided for its water supply, and he had evinced organizing and administrative ability. Now he hastened to the side of the Master, who named him to succeed to the headship of the Order of Assassins with three hierarchs to assist him until the Imam should assume actual authority.

If a scion of Nizar was in fact at or near Alamut, it is difficult to understand why he did not now take power, as two centuries earlier the Fatimid Kaim had succeeded Obaidullah as Khalif. There would appear to be three possible explana-

tions: he was a minor; Hasan considered him unfit to rule; he did not exist.

Whatever the reason, as night faded the Master assured his successor that as long as he proved worthy of his charge, his spirit would counsel him. It is even related that he whispered to him to remember that nothing was true, that everything was permitted. Thereupon, according to the Sunnite historian Juvaini, he departed for Hell.

FOUR



*The Great
Resurrection*



1124-1210



UMID [1124–1138]

Umid inherited a farflung state with continuous territory in the Elburz, in Kuhistan, and soon in Syria, mountain enclaves throughout the Seljuk realm, and colonies within Sunnite agglomerations. His subjects were encompassed by the execration of both Sunnites and other Shiites and were called atheists, Zarathustrans, foes of Islam, and communists of women and property. Their exposed colonies were subject to assaults and massacres, especially after a fidai's coup. Nor were the Assassins slow to retaliate, and their warriors were much feared, for they fought not for pay, but for their faith and often for their local independence.

It is as difficult to discern the lineaments of Umid's foreign policy as it is to distinguish Hasan's. In 1126 the Seljuks launched offensives against the Assassins in Kuhistan and the Alamut area. Not only were they beaten back, but the Alamutines expanded the area under their control.

A year later two Assassin envoys were savagely murdered by a mob in Isfahan. Although the regional Seljuk Sultan, Mahmud (Sanjar, the senior Sultan, having remained at Merv), expressed his regrets, he prudently avoided punishing the murderers. In retaliation the Assassins butchered four hundred Kaswini, while an attack on Alamut failed.

In the interim, two fidais had become grooms to Sanjar's Grand Vizir Kashi, who had led the recent expedition against the Assassins of Kuhistan. They were soon in his good graces. In March 1127 he asked them to help him select two Arabian steeds that he wished to present to the Sultan and went with them to the stables. They had hidden a dagger in a horse's mane. Pretending to calm the animal, one of the fidais tore out the weapon and stabbed the Vizir to death.

The Assassins then directed their attention to Cairo, where the Fatimid Khalif Amir had reigned since childhood. He had probably instigated the murder of his famous Vizir Afdal in 1121, had crucified his successor, and had flogged another to death. While his rule was cruel and oppressive, his taste in roses seems to have been exquisite. He had built a pleasure house for a beautiful woman on the Nile island of Roda, where the famous Nilometer was located.*

Thoughts of the Nilometer were probably not in the Khalif's mind on that November night in 1130 when, escorted by a few pages and courtiers, he was going up the lane on the Isle of Roda to the pavilion on the top of the hill. Suddenly ten fidais, armed with swords, sprang from the bushes and engaged the khalifal party, inflicting fatal wounds on the Khalif before

* Constructed in 716, this instrument measured the rise of the Nile's waters. Until it registered an elevation sufficient to immerse the parched fields of the Nile Valley, no land tax might be levied. It is said that when in need of funds, the government often falsified the actual height that the Nilometer recorded.

falling under the blades of his escort. The Khalif's demise seems to have been welcomed by the population.

As if to show no partiality between Fatimids and Abbasids, in 1135 twenty-four fidais invaded the camp near Maragha where the unfortunate Abbasid Khalif Mustarshid was held captive by the regional Seljuk Sultan Mahmud. It is recounted that they inflicted twenty-five wounds on him, slit open his abdomen, cut off his nose, decapitated him, stripped the corpse, and cut down two attendants who had sought to defend him. Soldiers gave chase and killed ten of the fidais. It would seem that the murder of the Shadow of God was essentially a symbolic act, since it appears devoid of political advantage. Nevertheless, at Alamut it was celebrated for a week with cymbals and kettledrums sounding, and the honorific title of Abbasi was bestowed on the killers.

Three years later, in Isfahan, Mustarshid's son Rashid, whom Mahmud had deprived of the khalifal office, was murdered by fidais who had taken service with him. The enraged Isfahanis butchered anyone suspected of being an Assassin, while in Alamut a week of festivities commemorated the deed.



MUHAMMAD I [1138–1162]

Umid ignored Hasan's example, and three days before his demise in 1138 named his son Muhammad his successor, thus giving the Assassins a dynasty. Then, according to Juvaini, his corpse added heat to the Hellfires. The wardens of Assassin castles also tended to pass their posts to their sons.

Meanwhile, in the northeast the Sultan Sanjar confronted a Mongol menace—the heathen Kara Khitay. Extending their rule over a vast tract southeastward from northern China, they had spread into Transoxiana. In 1141, alarmed by the threat to Islam, Sanjar advanced at the head of a proud and confident host and met the foe on the steppe near Samarkand. The Kara Khitay swept back his warriors and surrounded him. Stunned by his first reverse, the Sultan pierced the Mongolian lines with three hundred elite horsemen and escaped with only fifteen, leaving Transoxiana in the hands of the infidels.

Twelve years later, in 1153, Sanjar moved into the Balkh area to punish rebellious Turkomans. But these wild tribes routed his soldiers, captured him, plundered wealthy Merv and Nishapur, and ravaged Khurasan. Ultimately, the septuagenarian Sultan escaped, returned to Merv, and, saddened by its lamentable condition, gave up the ghost (1157). The process of Seljuk dissolution proceeded apace and the empire that the genius of Nizam al-Mulk had held together gradually disintegrated into a congeries of independent states.

Yet, although the Assassins did not in theory abandon the goal of conquering Islam, either from spiritual or material weakness or both, their policies and their military operations declined to a provincial level with importance attributed to such local triumphs as the capture of cattle. This diminution is marked by a decrease in the number of assassinations.

There were, however, doctrinal developments. While Muhammad, in keeping with Hasan Sabbah's principles, rigidly adhered to the outward observance of Sunnite usage, his learned, eloquent, courteous, and popular son Hasan, who avidly read the writings of Hasan Sabbah and spent many hours in his famous library, interpreted Assassin doctrine more freely. Many Assassins came to regard him as the Imam and were fortified in their conviction by the rumor that he drank wine, that is, that he was above the law. Muhammad denounced the belief that Hasan was the Imam and, according to Juvaini, put to death two hundred fifty of his followers, tied the cadavers to the backs of two hundred fifty others, and expelled them.



HASAN II [1162–1166]

Muhammad's death in 1162 gave free rein to Hasan II, now about thirty-five, and he ceased punishing violations of Muslim ritual law. In Ramadan 1164 he ordered the erection of a pulpit in the courtyard of Alamut. Unlike other Islamic pulpits, which enabled the worshipers to face Mecca, this one was itself directed toward that holy city. To this site Hasan, better known as Ala Khikrihil Salam (On His Mention Be Peace), convoked leading subjects from his farflung state on the anniversary of Ali's death.

At noon, clad in white and wearing a white turban, he mounted the pulpit, at whose corners were four banners—white, red, green, and yellow. Hasan courteously greeted his subjects. Then, addressing the denizens of the worlds, jinn,*

* The belief in jinn stems from pre-Islamic Arabia. Jinn were thought to be spiritual beings created before Man who lived under-

men, and angels, he announced that the hidden Imam had transmitted to him a message concerning the observance of their faith. (In the words of Juvaini, he told the bewildered wretches, whom he was leading to perdition, that he had received word from the imaginary Imam and delivered a discourse on his false and distorted beliefs.) The Imam, said Hasan, sent them his blessings, opened the gates of mercy and compassion to all Muslims, relieved them of the burdens of the ritual law, and brought them to the Resurrection and to God.

Thereupon he read to them the Imam's Arabic message, which an interpreter at the foot of the pulpit translated into Persian to the assembled Assassins. According to Juvaini, the epistle was a tissue of falsehoods, iniquitous words, and wicked absurdities. At all events, it proclaimed Hasan II dai, Khalif (the Imam's representative), and the Proof of the Imam. In these capacities he must be obeyed and followed in all spiritual and secular matters, his command must be regarded as binding, and his word must be deemed their word.

Then, according to Juvaini, he read aloud deceitful vanities, fraudulent subtleties, lying infamies, and godless obscenities unknown to the law of God and unacceptable to reason. The reading completed, Hasan II declared the Ramadan fast

ground and visited Man's world in various forms, sometimes as animals. Occasionally they could be heard but not seen. Indeed, in Arabic the word "jinn" means covered. If a person stumbled in the dark, he might have trod on a jinnee. If he ground his teeth while sleeping, he might be haunted by one. If he ate without assuaging his hunger, a jinnee might be within him, sharing his meal. Smallpox, convulsions, and arthritic and neuralgic pains were often attributed to jinn. If a man married a jinnee, she would kill him or drive him mad. The best protection against jinn was a lighted candle, for they feared light.

It might be relevant to note that demons were believed to be disembodied spirits of ignorant and wicked men who could not leave their former abodes.

ended, although it was only the seventeenth of the month, and invited his subjects to feast and make merry. Thereafter that day was joyously celebrated as the Festival of the Resurrection. (On that day, wrote Juvaini, the ignorant miscreants would drink wine and indulge in pleasures by whose shamelessness they sought to disgust the Muslims who had the misfortune to dwell among them.)

In the autumn of 1164 in Muminabad in Kuhistan, from another pulpit facing the opposite direction from Sunnite pulpits, it was announced that just as Mustansir had been God's vicar or Khalif and Hasan Sabbah had been Mustansir's vicar, now Hasan II was God's vicar or Khalif, and Muzaffer, chief dai of Kuhistan, was the vicar of Hasan II. As such, Muzaffer's commands were to be obeyed. The end of the ritual law and the advent of the Resurrection were then heralded. Juvaini indignantly records that after these ignominies had been divulged and these evils proclaimed the heretics made music and drank wine within the pulpit's very precincts. About the same time a message similar to the one delivered in Muminabad was conveyed to the Syrian Assassins.

Thus, Hasan II had altered Assassin doctrine and practice in four important respects. He had abolished the ritual law, inaugurated the Resurrection, made public secret doctrines theretofore known only to leaders, and elevated himself to Mahdi or Kaim (Bringer of the Resurrection).

By abolishing Muslim ritual law and thus dispensing the faithful from worship, fasting, abstention from wine and pork, etc., and by abandoning the cult, Hasan ended the dissimulation of the Assassin faith. It connoted final rupture with the Sunnites and renunciation of the effort to conquer Islam. Indeed, the Sunnites, having failed to avail themselves of the opportunity to be resurrected, were deemed to be spiritually dead and hence non-existent. Some persons, notably in Kuhis-

tan, opposed the abrogation of the ritual law and emigrated, for Hasan declared that as compliance with the law had formerly been enforced under pain of stoning, now its observance would be punished by the same penalty.

In ushering in the Great Resurrection, he had spiritualized an aged Levantine notion and created a mystic Paradise in which, with the Truth as dispensed by their Imam, his subjects believed that they had achieved immortality and could contemplate the Divine Essence. The Great Resurrection was the culmination of centuries of striving for greater spirituality. It meant the end of literalism and ritualism and was hailed as the advent of the Religion of Truth. Just as the Assassins' Heaven and Hell were regarded as spiritual, so the Great Resurrection was viewed as a spiritual resuscitation. Men abandoned their individuality, the consciousness of their own being, and returned to God. The Great Resurrection also shook the rigid religious order of Hasan Sabbah and transformed it into a democracy under a divinely appointed Imam.

It would seem that Hasan claimed no more than the spiritual Imamate, that is, that he was Nizar's spiritual scion. Later, however, physical descent from Nizar was attributed to him. It was alleged that his father was Nizar's grandson, posthumous son, or a son of one of them by Muhammad's wife or by his own wife, who when pregnant was given into Muhammad's care. Another version is that Hasan II was born in a village at the foot of Alamut, the son of Nizar's shadowy offspring, and was substituted for Muhammad's son, born in the castle the same day. Regardless of his descent, as Mahdi or Kaim he occupied a paramount position in the spiritual and secular lives of his subjects.

According to Juvaini, Hasan's brother-in-law, a descendant of the Buyids, who had controlled the Khalifate before the

Seljuks, was unable to endure the shameful errors of the Resurrection. In January 1166 he stabbed the beloved Hasan II to death in the Castle of Lamasar (for which act Juvaini prayed God to have mercy on him and to reward him for his good intention).¹²



RESURRECTIONAL ASSASSINISM

Though only nineteen, Hasan's son and successor Muhammad II firmly grasped power and executed his father's murderer and his kin. Muhammad (in name praiseworthy—the meaning of the word “Muhammad”—but in deed blameworthy, according to Juvaini) declared his martyred father physical as well as spiritual Imam and thus himself became unqualified Imam.

Moreover, Muhammad II developed and fostered resurrectional Assassinism, and it might be well at this point to outline the Assassins' religious ideas of the centuries following the Great Resurrection.

To them, the purpose of the Creation is still to enable Man to acquire a knowledge of God, that is, a knowledge of the external manifestation of unknowable God in the form of Universal Reason. Of this Divine Message the Imam is the unique

possessor, authorized by God to interpret its esoteric meanings, supplement it if necessary, bestow it on the faithful as they become able to receive it, and alter or abrogate the law promulgated by the Prophet.

Not only this world but eighteen thousand others depend on the Imam. If he were to disappear, even for a moment, the World would spiritually cease to exist. He has been ever-present and the light that inspires him, which also imbues the prophets, existed before the creation of the world. He ranks above the prophets and is inspired and instructed directly by God. He conveys to Mankind the knowledge of the mysteries of God, of the universe, and of invisible realities, which cannot be obtained without him. Whoever fails to seek this knowledge dies in a Godless and ignorant state without hope of immortality.

To recognize, follow, and obey the Imam is the equivalent of following God. When he rules, the world is bright, but when he is concealed, it is shrouded in darkness.

All Imams are of the same substance as Ali and are sinless and infallible. An Imam is appointed expressly or by implication by his father, who through his superhuman wisdom knows which of his sons God has destined to succeed him. The Divine Light is transferred to the son the moment the father dies. A minor Imam must have a relative as regent, but the Imamic line can never become extinct.

In the realm of Absolute Reality to which the Imam belongs no law is applicable. Not only may he disregard or rescind his predecessors' commandments; he may cancel his own. Nor may his followers judge his actions, which may be beyond the comprehension of ordinary mortals.

The Assassins seek God with uncommon ardor and find Him revealed, not in the Prophet, nor even in earlier Imams, but in their current Imam, the Proof of God. God is seen as the sun is

seen by its own light. Their Imam does not summon them to worship God. He summons them to God. He is the earthly focus of their entire religious life, for only through him can they obtain a knowledge of God, the basis of salvation. Without him there is no salvation, whereas through him they gain insight into the pure intellectual and spiritual reality of God.

That is their Resurrection and upon death their souls can enter Heaven purified of matter. Indeed, when the soul achieves the highest wisdom, it is assimilated by the Loftiest Wisdom of the Universe, an eternal substance of divine origin. Thereby the individual soul is absorbed by God, its original source.

Meanwhile, on earth, the Assassins, who apparently believe in Man's free will, aspire to lose themselves in God, to make their will and actions coincide with His, to love and obey Ali and his successors, to strive for moral perfection, and not to spare even their own lives to help fellow communicants.

Asceticism is not widely accepted by the Assassins. The flesh is viewed as a steed on which the soul travels through the desert of this world. If it is starved or mortified, it might lose the strength to carry its rider to his destination.¹³



MUHAMMAD II [1166-1210]

It was during the Imamate of Muhammad II that Razi, the celebrated Sunnite scholar at Ray, lectured against Ismaili doctrine. Incensed by his assault on the hallowed credenda, Muhammad dispatched a fidai to Ray. The young man attended Razi's lectures for seven months. One day he went to the venerable scholar's chamber on the pretext of obtaining elucidation of an abstruse theological problem. Finding Razi alone, he drew his dagger and announced his intention of slitting him open. After a brief struggle he hurled Razi to the floor, sat on him, and with his poniard at his throat extracted his oath to abandon his polemics against Assassanism. The fidai thereupon conveyed to him the Grand Master's invitation to visit Alamut, assuring him that he would be received with signal honors. The fidai further indicated that Assassins scorned the silly talk of the populace, but that the words of a

learned doctor pierced their hearts. He then gave Razi two Yemenite garments and a bag of gold dinars, the first payment of a pension that the Imam granted him. Later, a student asked Razi why he no longer assailed the Assassins. The prudent professor, who lived until 1209, replied that their arguments were too pointed.

While except for occasional provincial hostilities, the Resurrectional Assassins in the Elburz, Kuhistan, and Syria remained isolated from the inhabitants of the politically splintered Abbasid Khalifate, a new power south of the Aral began to expand. This was Khwarazm, a carefully irrigated region on the banks of the Lower Oxus, which was sheltered from attack by encircling deserts. About 1190 its Shah, Takash, a scion of a cupbearer of Malik Shah, conquered Khurasan, and in 1194, in response to an appeal for aid from the Abbasid Khalif Nasir, crushed and killed the last Seljuk Sultan at Ray. As master of the greater part of Iran he requested the Khalif to name him Sultan. This Nasir, who had become Khalif in 1180, refused to do. Indeed, after the fall of the Fatimids in 1171 and of the Seljuks in 1194 Nasir had espied the opportunity to restore a measure of Abbasid political power and religious unity. He had, in fact, established effective control over Irak, seized Khuzistan, and approached dissident sectaries on the question of religious reunion.

Meanwhile, in 1199 Khwarazmian troops and Assassins of the Elburz had clashed. On one occasion the Assassins in a fort near Kaswin were so hard pressed that they agreed to yield the stronghold provided that they were allowed to depart in peace. It was agreed that they should emerge in two groups: if the first were not attacked, the second would follow; otherwise, it would remain and fight. Thereupon, a band of Assassins issued from the fortress and marched off. The Khwarazmians waited for the second party to debouch

until they realized that the entire garrison had escaped unharmed.

The Assassins of Kuhistan were subjected to pressure not only by the Khwarazmians, but also by the Ghurids, recently Islamized mountaineers from the Hindu Kush, who had gained control of the Afghanistan area and challenged Khwarazmian suzerainty of eastern Iran. When a Ghurid ruler, Shibab al-Din (Youth of the Faith), was assassinated, it was alleged that it was the work of Assassins in collaboration with an Indian tribe also oppressed by him. The Assassins, however, claimed to have acted for the Shah of Khwarazm.

Concomitant with the increasing divinization of the Imam, the abandonment of universal aims, the decline of the Assassin hierarchy, and the transformation of Assassinism into a religion of personal salvation was the rise of the office of *hujja* (Proof of or Link to the Imam). Often related to the Imam, believed to be a manifestation of the same divine substance, and endowed with the superhuman knowledge and infallibility of the Imam, the *hujja* stood to the Imam as the Imam stood to God. Only through the *hujja* could the faithful know the Imam, as only through the Imam could they know God.

Muhammad II, who despite his forty-four year reign has been neglected by Persian chroniclers, died in September 1210 and was succeeded by his son Hasan III.

FIVE



Sinan



1094–1193



FIRST CRUSADE [1095-1100]

Except for a brief period in the early eleventh century when the mad Fatimid Khalif Hakim demolished the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and other Christian shrines and otherwise persecuted Christians—as well as Jews and Muslims—Muslim authorities treated Christian natives and pilgrims relatively well. The Turks' invasion of Syria and the Holy Land, their capture of Jerusalem in 1071, and subsequent Turkish-Fatimid hostilities, however, tended to render Christian pilgrimages hazardous.

Consequently, in 1095 the handsome, bearded, courtly Pope Urban II called on Latin Christians to terminate their internecine strife and direct their arms against the infidel, liberate the Holy Sepulcher, and thereby amass heavenly rewards. Soon throngs of Crusaders (some with their families)—poor peasants, indigent townsmen, brigands, knights, and landlords

—were moving eastward. Mingled with their religious aspirations were more mundane motives for taking the Cross—to escape debt, bondage, or punishment, to make a fortune, to acquire lands and possibly sovereignty. In crossing Europe, they applied to Jews, fellow Catholic Christians, and Orthodox Christians some of the abuse—spoliation, arson, torture, butchery—that they were planning to inflict on the sons of Allah. As a result, some were annihilated by the Hungarians. Others reached Constantinople, capital of the Roman Empire, and crossed to Anatolia, only to fall prey to the forces of the regional Seljuk Sultan.

These unruly multitudes were followed by the chivalry of Europe, led by such men as Godfrey of Bouillon, Duke of Lower Lorraine; Raymond of Saint-Gilles, Count of Toulouse and Marquis of Provence; and Bohemond, Norman Prince of Taranto. These men seemed determined to carve out Levantine principalities for themselves. While there was some marauding and some fighting against imperial forces around Constantinople, in due course most of these feudatories acknowledged the Roman Emperor as their lord and promised to restore to the Empire lands they might conquer that had been hers before the Turkish irruption. In the spring of 1097, upon fulfilment of these formalities, the Crusaders crossed to Anatolia. Here, in concert with imperial forces, they performed a task in their common interest, driving the Turks out of western Anatolia. Thus they retrieved lost lands for the Empire and cleared the roads leading to the Holy Land that they required for reinforcements.

When the Crusaders reached Marash, Baldwin of Boulogne, landless younger brother of Godfrey of Bouillon, left them to seek his fortune. He moved eastward with his knights through territory that had been occupied by Christian Armenians fleeing from the Turkish invasion of their ancestral lands. The



Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives. Within the city may be seen the Dome of the Rock, the oldest extant Muslim shrine, completed in 691 over the rock from which Muhammad was believed to have made his nocturnal ascent to Heaven; it is also the site of the Temple of Solomon. [From *Giorgio Briano, La Siria e l'Asia Minore illustrate da centoventi finissimi intagli* (Torino: Giuseppe Ponte, 1841); engraving by Fisher, Son & Co., London and Paris]

Armenians welcomed him as an ally against the Seljuk Turks. Indeed, the elderly, childless lord of Edessa, Thoros, adopted him as his successor.* Thoros was soon murdered, and in 1098 Baldwin, disregarding his oath to restore quondam imperial territory to the Empire, became ruler of a state on both banks

* Edessa is famous in Christian legend for a letter and portrait that Jesus is alleged to have sent its elderly King Abgar. Not only is the portrait said to have restored the ailing prince to health, but a postscript guaranteed the city against capture.

of the Euphrates. As lord of this polity, the first Latin state to be founded in the Levant, he adopted the title Count of Edessa.

What was the political situation in Syria and the Holy Land at this time? The population was rent by racial and religious animosities—Arab emirs against Turkish emirs, Muslims against native Christians, indigenous Syrians against Arab, Kurdish, and Turkoman immigrants, Sunnites against Shiites, Shiite sectaries against Shiite sectaries (Assassins, Fatimid Ismailis, Druzes, Nosairis), Orthodox Christians against Christian heretics, Christian dissenters against Christian dissenters (Jacobites, Nestorians, Armenians, Maronites). This separatism was fostered by dividing deserts and mountain ranges. Moreover, after the death of Malik Shah in 1092 central Seljuk control had lapsed and the area had decomposed into more or less independent states.

Of these, the most important were Aleppo, Damascus, and Antioch. The Seljuk ruler of Aleppo was warring with his brother, the lord of Damascus, while the governor of Antioch, technically subject to Aleppo, was practically independent. And in August 1098 the Fatimid Khalif reconquered Jerusalem from the Seljuks and advanced as far north as Beirut. Thus, with the Crusaders at the threshold of Syria, the Muslims of the area were weakened not only by the Christians among them and their own racial and religious disunity, but also by Seljuk rivalries and the overriding Abbasid-Fatimid schism.

Meanwhile, in October 1097, the Crusaders had reached strongly walled Antioch, the beautiful Hellenistic city where Christians had first been called by that name and whose inhabitants were mostly Jacobite, Armenian, and Orthodox Christians. Eight months later the city was betrayed into their hands. In violation of his oath to the Emperor, Bohemond of

Taranto became Prince of Antioch, and after some delay the other Crusaders marched on Jerusalem.

In June 1099 they came within sight of its gleaming white domes and five weeks later stormed it, butchering Jews and Muslims, regardless of age or sex. After the carnage they repaired to the Holy Sepulcher to render thanks, weeping with devout delight. The Holy City became the capital of a state that included also Jaffa, Ramleh, Galilee, and soon Haifa. Godfrey of Bouillon was chosen its head with the title Defender of the Holy Sepulcher, and given three hundred horse and two thousand foot to protect it. A Fatimid counterattack was repulsed, and the Coptic, Jacobite, Armenian, Georgian, and Orthodox Christians were deprived of the freedom of worship they had enjoyed under Muslim rule.

Their mission accomplished, twenty thousand Crusaders began the homeward journey. They left behind four Latin statelets, the one founded in the Holy City, which became the Kingdom of Jerusalem upon the accession of Godfrey's brother, Count Baldwin of Edessa, in 1100; the Principality of Antioch; the County of Edessa; and soon the County of Tripoli.



ALEPPINE ASSASSINS [1094-1114]

Many Syrian Ismailis became Assassins about the time of the Crusaders' invasion. Their presence weakened Islam and thus facilitated the consolidation of Latin power in the Levant. Strong in Aleppo, the Assassins collaborated with its Seljuk ruler, Ridwan, in his endeavor to extend his suzerainty over northern Syria. In this marriage of convenience the Assassins enhanced their position. Although Ridwan does not seem to have trusted them, he erected a house of propaganda for them in Aleppo and instructed his emirs to recognize their authority in the provinces. Thus, the Assassins became involved in the phantasmagoria of shifting hostilities and alliances with Muslim emirs and Latin lords through which Ridwan vainly sought to dominate northern Syria.

The lord of the Orontine town of Homs, where the effeminate young Roman Emperor Elagabalus had been high priest of

the sungod whose name he bore, was Janah al-Dawlah (Protector of the Realm). Ridwan's father had bestowed the city on him in 1094 when he created him atabeg, that is, regent-guardian for young Ridwan. Janah was also the husband of Ridwan's mother. This intimate relationship did not veil the fact that his possession of Homs blocked Ridwan's expansionist plans.

In May 1103 Janah and his mailed officers, who were about to take the field against invading Latins, descended from the citadel and entered the mosque at Homs for Friday prayers. Among the worshipers were Persian fidais disguised as Sufi monks with a saintly old man. This venerable elder gave a signal and the fidais attacked the atabeg with their knives, killing him and some of his officers before they fell under the swords of the surviving members of his staff. Ridwan, however, does not seem to have coordinated his operations with the Assassins, and his brother, the ruler of Damascus, acquired Homs, installing his atabeg as its lord.

Soon after the assassination of Janah, the Persian leader of the Syrian Assassins, known as the Physician-Astrologer, died and was succeeded by the Persian Tahir, the Goldsmith. Hoping to establish Assassin strength on a more solid foundation than the goodwill of a ruler, Tahir endeavored to acquire mountain strongholds but without permanent result.

Tahir then determined to seize Apamea, the most southerly site at which Hittite inscriptions have been found and famous for the soporific singing sound of its water wheels, which night and day pour Orontine water into its aqueducts. It was governed by the Fatimid emir Khalaf. From Aleppo, consequently, Tahir sent six fidais, who brought Khalaf the horse, mule, and equipment of a Crusader whom they claimed to have killed. Impressed, Khalaf engaged them and established them in his citadel in quarters next to the wall. In February



Ancient Aleppo. Aleppo was already the capital of a kingdom when the Hittites took it about 1750 B.C. In the background is the ruined citadel from which Assassins were hurled in 1113. Adjoining the square minaret, erected about 1100, is the Great Mosque, which was rebuilt after it burned in the 1170s, when the Assassins set fire to the bazaar in reprisal for Aleppine seizure of one of their villages. Pre-Islamic square towers in Damascus became the first minarets soon after 700, and Syrian minarets remained square until after 1200. [From René Dussaud et al., *La Syrie antique et médiévale illustrée* (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1931)]

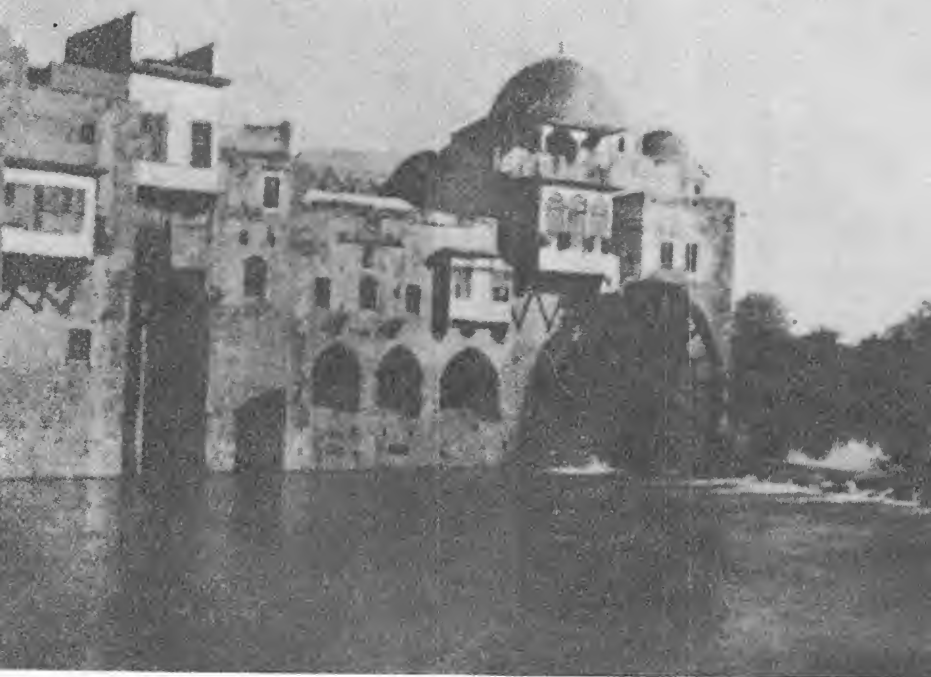
1106 they burrowed through the wall and admitted a resident Assassin dai, Abul Fath, and his sectaries. Thus reinforced, they entered the citadel's sleeping quarters, slew the members of Khalaf's family and household, and penetrated to the room where Khalaf was resting with his wife. Khalaf asked Abul Fath who he was. "The Angel of Death, and I have come to

take your soul," replied the stern Assassin and proceeded with the task.¹⁴ The murders accomplished, the Assassins took over the town.

Eight months later Tancred, the Norman Regent of Antioch, invested Apamea, forced the Assassins to surrender, exacted ransom for Tahir and the Aleppine Assassins, and turned Abul Fath over to Khalaf's surviving sons, who tortured him to death. This Christian intervention does not seem to have deflected the Assassins from their main objective—the overthrow of Seljuks and Abbasids.

Sunnite opinion was incensed by Ridwan's collaboration with the Assassins. To appease the general indignation, he butchered a few Aleppine Assassins but allowed Tahir and a large group to escape from the city (1108). Nevertheless, distrusting his relations with Assassins and Latins, a group of Aleppines appealed to the Khalif at Baghdad for holy war against the Latins. Their call was heeded by Mawdud, Seljuk emir of Mosul, the city that lies opposite the ruins of Nineveh on the other bank of the Tigris and that gave its name to muslin. In 1111 Mawdud led an army across the Euphrates. Lest Mawdud join with his foes within the city, Ridwan closed the gates to the Muslim host and, supported by the Assassins, withstood a brief siege. After inconclusive hostilities against the Latins, Mawdud recrossed the Euphrates.

In 1113 Mawdud returned to Syria to help Tughtegin, Regent of Damascus, against the attack of the King of Jerusalem, whom they defeated on the banks of the upper Jordan. Later, as the two allies were leaving the Great Mosque of Damascus on the last Friday in September, encompassed by stalwart warriors bearing a variety of flashing weapons, a man emerged from the admiring crowd, apparently intending to bless Mawdud and ask for alms. Instead, he seized the belt of



Hama on the Orontes, with one of the famous waterwheels which for centuries have been groaning and creaking day and night to supply Orontine towns, gardens, and orchards. [*From Ce que tout Français doit savoir de la Syrie et du Liban (Paris: Emile Larose, 1922)*]

his cloak and stabbed him twice below the navel. He had barely withdrawn his poniard when he fell under a torrent of weapons. Disregarding his wounds, Mawdud proceeded as far as the gate of the forecourt, where he collapsed. Taken to Tughtegin's residence, he refused food because he wished to appear before God without having broken the fast. His wounds were sewn by a surgeon, but he expired a few hours later. The murderer's head was removed, but although he was believed to have been an Assassin, he was not identified. Some thought that Tughtegin, fearing that Mawdud might seize Damascus, had been involved in the assassination. However

that might be, the demise of this formidable foe was a boon to the Latins.

Three months later, with the death of Ridwan of Aleppo, the Assassins lost their Syrian patron. Ridwan's son, who was sixteen and strongly influenced by his Vizir, the eunuch Lulu, bowed to the demands of the Sultan Muhammad Tapar and to those of his Sunnite and Shiite subjects that he take action against the Assassins. He executed Tahir and other leaders, hurled some Assassins from the citadel, and exiled others. Many sought refuge among the Latins. The lack of mountain strongholds, the basis of Assassin strength in Iran, was all too apparent.



DAMASCENE ASSASSINS [1114-1131]

Some of the Assassins expelled from Aleppo found a haven in Shaizar. Situated on a bend of the Orontes, this town was already mentioned in Egyptian inscriptions fifteen centuries before Christ. In 1114 the Assassins took advantage of the absence of the ruling family and many of the inhabitants (who were viewing Christian religious celebrations in the vicinity) to seize the town. The indignant Shaizarites resisted and were soon supported by returning townsmen. They drove the Assassins within the citadel, overwhelmed them, and killed them all.

Meanwhile, the new chief dai of the Syrian Assassins, the Persian Bahram, was moving about Syria in disguise. In 1125 Damascus was threatened by the Latins and was in need of reinforcements. There were no better fighters in Islam than the Assassins, and Tughtegin engaged them, giving them a build-



The citadel of aged Shaizar which the Assassins sought to seize in 1114. In the foreground is the ruined bridge that led over the Orontes to the lower town. [From René Dussaud et al., *La Syrie antique et médiévale illustrée* (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Guethner, 1931)]

ing in Damascus for their headquarters and the exposed fortress of Banyas near the frontier of the Kingdom of Jerusalem. Such was Bahram's position in Damascus that he preached openly and apparently converted many artisans and peasants. At Banyas he followed the Assassin policy of bringing the adjacent area under Assassin control by missionary and military means. In this process he met death.

His successor, the Persian Ismail, pursued the same course.

The demise of Tughtegin in 1128, however, and the accession of his son Buri altered the Assassins' situation. In September 1129 at a reception at the palace Buri murdered his pro-Assassin vizir. The unfortunate man's head was severed and displayed in the city. It was the signal for an indiscriminate massacre of Assassins, further stimulated by the rumor that they had planned to betray Damascus to the Latins in return for Tyre. Possibly ten thousand were butchered. A particularly hated Assassin was crucified on the city wall.

Fearing reprisals, Buri never left the palace unless mailed and with a heavy guard. But two fidais came from Alamut, pretended to be Turkish soldiers, and enrolled in his service. In May 1131 they stabbed him as he was leaving his bath and were immediately dispatched by his guards. Wounded in neck and hip, Buri lingered on and died a year later of the hip wound, which had reopened.

In the interim, the Assassins had found that they could not hold Banyas and had relinquished it to the Latins, among whom they found refuge.



MOUNTAIN ASSASSINS [1132-1170]

Their reverses did not deter the Assassins in their effort to establish their power on the possession of mountain strongholds. At length, between 1132 and 1140 they acquired about ten castles in the wild Ansaria range between the Orontes and the Mediterranean. Of these, Kadmus and Kahf were purchased, Khariba was taken from Latins, Masyaf from Muslims. Like Alamut, Masyaf was atop a projecting, almost perpendicular rock and dominated a somber landscape. Kahf and Masyaf were the main abodes of the chief dai of Syria, known to the Crusaders as the Old Man of the Mountain.

Thus, during the 1130s the theretofore amorphous Assassin movement of Syria became a territorial state with its center in the Ansarias. This did not markedly change its policy, which resembled that of the other Muslim statelets in Syria. To them, the main foe was not the Latin invaders, who formed small



The Orontes. The valley of Syria's principal but largely unnavigable river was once an important military and commercial route between Egypt and Asia Minor. In the Ansaria Mountains between it and the Mediterranean stood the Assassins' castles, and in or near it were the towns of Homs, Hama, Shaizar, Apamea, and Antioch. [*From Giorgio Briano*]

states similar to their own in petty power and purpose; it was the Atabeg of Mosul, a ruler with the potency to unite the Syrian statelets under his sway. Thus, the cause of Syrian fission united Assassins with Christians and other Muslims. It has been seen that in 1111 Assassins collaborated with Ridwan of Aleppo to bar from that city Mawdud of Mosul, who had come to combat the Latins, and two years later, perhaps with Tughtegin of Damascus, to assassinate him.

In 1127 Zengi became Atabeg of Mosul, occupied Aleppo the next year, extended his authority over northern Syria as far south as Homs, and in 1144 took Edessa. The fall of the



Ruins of the Castle of Masyaf. Atop a precipitous cliff, this stronghold and that of Khaf were the chief Assassin castles of Syria, where the Old Man of the Mountain resided. [From Paul Jacquot, *L'état des Alaouites* (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1929)]

capital of the first Latin state in the Levant alarmed Christendom. It was apparent that the alliance of Muslim Damascus and Christian Jerusalem, the mainstay of the resistance to Zengi, was not strong enough to withstand him, and it was feared that he would sweep away the remaining Latin states.

As a result, the Second Crusade took shape. Before it reached the Holy Land, Zengi was murdered by an offended

Latin eunuch. His realm was divided by two sons, one taking Mosul, the other, Nuraddin (Light of the Faith), Aleppo. In 1148 the men of the Second Crusade, led by the French and German Kings, entered the Holy Land and, together with the King of Jerusalem, attacked, not Aleppo, but Damascus, former ally and even now anxious to resume the alliance with the Christians against Aleppo. The assault failed, and the Crusaders departed, leaving the Latins exposed to the ambitions of Nuraddin, a just, devout, and charitable man.

In defense of Syrian diversity an Assassin leader, the Kurdish Ali ibn Wafa, joined Prince Raymond of Antioch against Nuraddin and died with him in battle in 1149. Nuraddin continued to expand his dominion, taking Damascus in 1154 and Mosul in 1170.

In the interim the Assassins' championship of Syrian fragmentation did not preclude quarrels with neighboring states. Thus, in 1152, probably because of a boundary conflict, Assassins fell upon and killed Count Raymond II of Tripoli and two members of his suite as he was returning to Tripoli. He was their first Latin victim. To avenge his death, the Christian Tripolitans indiscriminately butchered the Muslims among them. The Latins then made war on the Assassins and, possibly as a result, the Templars were able to impose tribute on them.

It is ironic that it should be the Knights of the Temple who exacted tribute, for, founded a generation after the Assassins to protect Christian pilgrims to the Holy Land, their organization seems to have owed much to them. They took vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, formed a hierarchy, and also wore white. The weapon of assassination was ineffective against an order of their nature, for they could not be disorganized by the murder of their Grand Master. If he was killed, he was immediately replaced by a fellow knight.



SINAN [1162–1176]

In 1162 there appeared in Syria a representative of the Imam Hasan II. This was Sinan, also known as Rashid al-Din (Orthodox in Faith). He was lame, handsome, of middle height, had dark eyes, and was acute, learned, eloquent, and quick-witted. The son of a Basran notable and said to be an alchemist, born probably in the 1130s, Sinan was early converted to Assassanism, apparently quarreled with his brothers, left home penniless, and traveled to Alamut. The Grand Master Muhammad welcomed him and educated him with his own sons. Soon after the accession of Hasan II in 1162 he was dispatched to the Castle of Kahf in Syria, apparently as chief dai of the Syrian Assassins. He is described by a thirteenth-century chronicler as an eminent man of secret devices, vast designs, and great deceit, able to incite and mislead, to outwit his foes, and to employ the vile and absurd for evil pur-

poses.¹⁵ His fourteenth-century admirer, Abu Firas, on the other hand, writes that Sinan's virtues pierced the eyes of renegades, resembled meteors that consume the foes of the faith, and were extraordinary marvels that rejoiced the hearts of true believers.¹⁶

Of Sinan many tales have come down the ages. Fact and fancy are almost inextricably intertwined. Many anecdotes that are related of him are also told of Hasan Sabbah, for medieval Oriental chroniclers tend to use a good story indiscriminately.

Upon reaching the vicinity of Castle Kahf, clad in a rough, striped Yemenite burnous and wearing footgear that he had fabricated himself, this pious ascete, whose life seemed dedicated to prayer and good works, began to teach writing to the children. If a villager fell ill, he cured him. He consequently came to be called the Physician and was soon esteemed a saint. His habits gave credence to this belief. He was often seen sitting on a rock for hours, apparently in converse with invisible beings. He was never seen to eat, drink, or expectorate, to say nothing of baser functions. His fame soon reached the ears of Abu Muhammad, the aged chief dai of the Syrian Assassins, who invited him to work for his keep in Castle Kahf.

This Sinan is said to have done for seven years. Then, one day in 1169 or earlier, he entered Abu Muhammad's cabinet, apprised him that he was about to die, and showed him a document from Alamut that seven years earlier had appointed him chief dai in Syria. After the old man's demise and a brief usurpation of his post, Sinan assumed his functions.

Some members of the garrison of Masyaf seem not to have accepted his authority and in a nocturnal meeting plotted against him. Having an efficient secret service, Sinan was forewarned of their identity and their plans. He wrote the castellan their names and their intentions and ordered him to

reprimand them. Disconcerted by the discovery of their cabal, the conspirators saw therein evidence of Sinan's clairvoyance and submitted.

If the tale that Sinan prevented his guards from killing a large serpent because it was actually a recently deceased Assassin leader performing his purgatorial duties is true, it would indicate either that he had a sardonic sense of humor or that he believed in metempsychosis.

Two other stories would seem to confirm the latter assumption. At Khaf, Sinan once told an attendant to give a coin to the monkey of a wandering entertainer. The monkey looked at it intently, then suddenly expired. Sinan reimbursed the owner of the beast for its loss and, upon the latter's inquiring why his animal had died, informed him that in a previous life it had been the king whose bust was minted on the specie. When it saw the effigy, God permitted it to remember its former estate. The shock of its present degradation killed it.

On another occasion, Sinan was in a village when a beautiful mare left its master and trotted up to Sinan, who spoke comfortingly to it, assured it that he would take care of it, and sent it back to its owner. A moment later the mare dropped dead. The indignant rider asked Sinan for an explanation and was told that in a previous existence the animal had been the daughter of a king. It had complained to Sinan that its master maltreated it and implored him to intercede with God to release it. It was obvious that the Deity had immediately acceded to the intercession of so eminent a colleague.

It is recounted that such were Sinan's telepathic powers that he could read a person's thoughts and could receive a letter, leave it unopened, and yet reply to it as if he had read it. Skeptics believe that secret agents throughout Syria and a pigeon postal system hidden in sepulchral mounds on mountain tops near Assassin castles considerably aided his fore-

knowledge of thoughts and events. Only at night and accompanied by a single attendant would Sinan climb up to his pigeon post. One night when his attendant came upon him talking with a green pigeon, Sinan informed him that it was the late Imam Hasan II.

It is also reported that one day, perhaps at twilight, Sinan called his fidais to his chamber. On the floor was a bloody plate with the head of one of their comrades, who had apparently been decapitated after the accomplishment of a murder mission. Addressing the head, the Lord of the Mountain asked whether the fidai wanted to return to earth. Unhesitatingly, the head replied that it preferred to remain in Paradise and described its joys in glowing terms. After the fidais had filed out, Sinan was said to have uncoupled the plate from the neck of the fidai, whose body was in a space below the floor, and with a single sweep of his scimitar severed the head from the trunk, sending the young man to the Paradise of which he had just spoken with such enthusiasm.

Another much-told tale is said to derive from a putative visit to Sinan of Henry of Champagne (titular King of Jerusalem, 1192-1197). The two were strolling in the castle courtyard when Sinan declared that he was certain that no Christian heeded his prince as the Assassins obeyed him. To prove his point he signaled to two fidais on a castle tower. They immediately leaped to their deaths. Lest his guest be unconvinced, Sinan offered to command the remaining youths on the tower to do likewise. Champagne, however, felt that the point had been sufficiently proven. It will be recalled that a similar story adorns the life of Hasan of Alamut.

It was said that Sinan's figure was not reflected by water, and apparently he did not discourage the belief that divinity was incarnate in his personable self. Indeed, some of his followers are reported to have considered him God. He is said

to have been lamed when a rock loosened by an earthquake fell upon his leg. Was he already in Syria at the time of the terrible earthquake of 1157-1158, which raged fourteen months and leveled many Syrian cities and castles? At all events, it is recounted that some of his worshipers reasoned that God could not be lame and surrounded him, intending to kill him in order that he might reincarnate himself in perfect condition. It required the full measure of Sinan's wit and eloquence to dissuade them.

It would appear that Sinan allowed that he was the sovereign master of creation, truth, and pardon; the dispenser of will and command; that whoever knew him inwardly possessed the truth; that he had first appeared on earth as Adam; that in the period of Noah and the Flood those who trusted in his knowledge were saved by his mercy and grace, while those who denied his link to God perished; that in the cycle of Abraham he had borne the titles of star, moon, and sun; that he had revealed mysteries to Moses and Aaron; that he had reappeared as Jesus the Messiah and remitted men's sins; that he had been reincarnated as Ali, the Lord of Time, and been concealed in Muhammad; but that religion was not complete until he had arrived as Sinan.¹⁷

Gradually Sinan became independent of Alamut. Apparently, he was to such extent a free agent that about 1174 he wrote the King of Jerusalem, offering to convert the Assassins to Christianity, provided the tribute to which the Templars had subjected them be remitted. The murder of an Assassin emissary by the Templars, however, led to the miscarriage of these engaging negotiations.

It is also related that the Imam Muhammad II sent fidais to Syria to kill Sinan. Some lost their lives in the attempt, others went over to him. He was not only an outstanding personality but also an efficient administrator. He consolidated the Assas-

sin position in Syria, organizing and training fidais (probably in the Castle of Kahf), acquiring and erecting new castles, rebuilding and fortifying old ones.

It would seem that the end of the ritual law and the introduction of the Resurrection in 1164 had led to some excesses. Indeed, a Sunnite chronicler indignantly and perhaps exaggeratedly asserted that the Assassins abandoned themselves to iniquity and debauchery, men mingling with women in licentious saturnalia, women wearing men's attire, and men defiling their mothers, sisters, and daughters. In 1176, Sinan apparently terminated such activities with slaughter.



SALADIN [1169-1193]

In foreign policy Sinan pursued the traditional course—the defense of Syrian diversity. He thus came to oppose the most chivalrous character of the age—Saladin (Honor of the Faith). This modest, studious, cultured Kurd, born in 1138, had spent his early childhood among the lofty Roman temples transformed into the citadel of Baalbek, where his father was governor. He soon entered the service of Nuraddin, lord of Aleppo and Damascus, and participated in the expeditions that that ruler sent to Egypt and in the resultant hostilities with Jerusalem, whose king also aspired to acquire the declining Fatimid Khalifate.

By 1169 Nuraddin's forces had triumphed, and Saladin, a devout Sunnite, was Grand Vizir of the Fatimid Khalif and actual ruler of Egypt. He treated the reigning Fatimid Khalif with kindness, allowed him to die in peace, and proclaimed

Egypt's spiritual submission to the Abbasid Khalif. Thus, after an existence of two and a half centuries the Fatimid Khalifate, which had once seemed on the verge of extending Ismaili rule over all Islam, quietly expired. Saladin was uniting Levantine Islam.

Upon Nuraddin's death in 1174, however, his Syro-Mesopotamian realm disintegrated. In an effort to restore Muslim unity, Saladin advanced into Syria, occupied Damascus, and moved on Aleppo. Syro-Mesopotamian Sunnites, Shiites, Latins, and Assassins united against him.

It is said that the Aleppine regent paid Sinan to assassinate Saladin. At all events, Sinan sent a group of fidais to his camp. When an emir asked them what they wanted, they stabbed him. A fidai rushed to Saladin's tent, at the entrance of which another emir with a powerful saber stroke slashed off his head. The other fidais followed and after a sanguinary encounter with Saladin's attendants died fighting.

A few months later, in April 1175, Saladin crushed the combined forces of Mosul and Aleppo at the Battle of the Horns of Hama near the gorge of the Orontes and concluded a truce leaving him in possession of Damascus and a large part of northern Syria, including Homs, Hama, and Baalbek. Hostilities resumed a year later, and again Saladin routed the Mosul-Aleppine host, treating his captives and the wounded of both sides with care and courtesy.

In May 1176 he beleaguered Azaz, a small town with a powerful citadel, good air, pure water, no scorpions, and a day's march from Aleppo. He was alone, resting in the tent of one of his officers, when a fidai, who was a member of his bodyguard, crept in and struck at his head with his knife. Saladin's headgear was lined with mail and the blade did not penetrate. The fidai then slashed at the Sultan's throat. Saladin, a skillful polo player, reached quickly for his wrist

and deflected the blade. An officer rushed in and seized and held the knife, although it cut his fingers. A guard hastened to the struggling group and killed the Assassin, who expired still clutching the dagger. Two more fidais, also wearing the yellow tunic of the bodyguard, penetrated the tent but were quickly sabered by Saladin's officers.

Saladin took Azaz, made peace with Aleppo and Mosul, returned Azaz to the young ruler of Aleppo on the intercession of his little sister, and then, in August 1176, advanced to besiege Masyaf. As he was riding under a walnut tree, a fidai jumped from the tree to murder him. But he landed on the steed's rump, fell to the ground, and was dispatched by Saladin's bodyguards.¹⁸ With the Latins advancing near Baalbek, Saladin could ill afford the time that the siege of Masyaf required. He and Sinan apparently agreed that he would thereafter avoid Assassin territory, while Sinan would cease endeavoring to send him to the other world.

Relieved of Assassin attentions, Saladin continued the conquest of the Levant, acquiring Aleppo in 1183 and imposing his suzerainty on Mosul in 1186. The following year, on a scorching summer day on a parched plain near the Sea of Galilee, he crushed a thirst-maddened Christian host and captured the King of Jerusalem, Guy of Lusignan. It is recorded that, possibly as a result of the hostility of the Templars and Hospitallers, fidais fought in Saladin's army. In October 1187 he took Jerusalem, his humane conduct, indeed, his compassionate charity, contrasting sharply with the savagery of the Christian conquest eighty-eight years earlier. Town after town surrendered to him, relying on his reputation for generosity and the scrupulous observance of his word. Soon only Tyre, Tripoli, and Antioch remained in Christian hands.

Christendom was aghast. The Pope preached the Third



Baalbek. On the left are six columns of the Roman Temple of Jupiter. On the right are the remains of a Roman temple believed to have upheld for centuries the cult of Bacchus on a site hallowed since remote time by the worship of the sun, first as Baal, then as Helios, finally as Jupiter. Around these stately columns in the desolate grandeur of the Anti-Lebanon the young Saladin must have played. [From *Giorgio Briano*, *La Siria e l'Asia Minore illustrate da centoventi finissimi intagli* (Torino: *Giuseppe Ponte*, 1841); engraving by *Fisher, Son & Co., London and Paris*]

Crusade. The Norman King of Sicily, William II, sent a fleet to succor the menaced Latin statelets. The German Emperor Barbarossa marched eastward in 1190, only to drown in an Anatolian stream. His host dissolved, and merely a thousand men under the command of his son Frederick of Suabia reached the Holy Land. Here, at the siege of Acre, which Saladin had captured, he joined the King of France, Philip Augustus; the King of England, Richard the Lionhearted;

miscellaneous Crusaders; and the King of Jerusalem, Guy of Lusignan, whom Saladin had released on his oath never again to bear arms against his captor.

Saladin went to the aid of his newly acquired city, but his lightly armed warriors could not dislodge the heavily armed



Saladin (?). Of Saladin's appearance only one detail has come down the ages—he was bearded; it is recorded that he tugged at his beard during the battle of Hattin near the Sea of Galilee in 1187. This rapidly executed portrait, apparently drawn from life, is believed to depict Saladin about 1180. From a manuscript written before 1185, it portrays the great Sultan with a golden halo, seated on a golden throne and dressed in a dark-red caftan whose large pattern indicates his exalted rank. [From *F. R. Martin, The Miniature Painting and Painters of Persia . . .* (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1912)]

Crusaders from their fortified camp, and in July 1191 the Muslim garrison of Acre capitulated. In striking contrast to Saladin's forbearing manner of waging war, Richard the Lionhearted beheaded almost three thousand Muslim captives.

The King of France (who departed soon after the capture of Acre) and most of the Crusaders wished Conrad of Montferrat, lord of Tyre, to succeed the incapable Guy of Lusignan as King of Jerusalem, while King Richard favored his own nephew, Count Henry of Champagne. Richard bowed to the will of the majority and sent Champagne to Tyre to inform Montferrat of his election. Lusignan became King of Cyprus.

Montferrat was renowned as the savior of Tyre, famous for its purple since remote antiquity. When five years earlier Saladin had threatened to kill his father, who was his captive, unless he surrendered the ancient city, Montferrat had replied that the old gentleman had already lived long enough. Needless to say, the humane Sultan did not harm his prisoner.

On an April evening of 1192 Montferrat was waiting for dinner in his palace in Tyre. His wife, Isabelle, daughter of the late King Amalric of Jerusalem, was tarrying in her bath longer than was her wont. Growing impatient, Montferrat went to the residence of the Bishop of Beauvais, hoping to find a meal. His Reverence, however, had already dined. Declining his invitation to remain, Montferrat departed for home. In a narrow street two monks, whom he knew to be Christian converts, accosted him with a letter. As he reached for it, they stabbed him. One of the fidais was seized. The other fled to a church, where he hid. By chance Montferrat's attendants carried him to the same church to dress his wounds. Seeing that the victim was not yet dead, the fidai emerged from his refuge and plunged his poniard into his bleeding body.

Tortured with slow fire and flaying, the fidai alleged that he had acted on behalf of Richard the Lionhearted. The fact that

a week after the assassination Richard's nephew Henry of Champagne married Montferrat's widow and was acclaimed King of Jerusalem (May 1192) lent some credence to this charge. It might be remembered, however, that fidais' confessions were not noted for their accuracy. Moreover, Montferrat had recently put to death a stranded Assassin, confiscated his property, and had not heeded Sinan's demands for compensation.

Meanwhile, the Third Crusade was drawing to a close. In August 1192 Saladin and Richard the Lionhearted signed a treaty leaving the Christians the coastal cities as far south as Jaffa. A half year later the great and gentle Kurd, who had withstood the might of Christendom concentrated in the Third Crusade, reduced Levantine Latium to a coastal strip, and established Islamic unity from Libya to the Tigris, died. Within the year Sinan also joined his celestial associates.

SIX



Post-Resurrection



1210–1291



HASAN III [1210-1221]

Hasan III, also known as Jalal al-Din (The Majesty of the Faith), became Imam and Grand Master in 1210. The son of a pious Sunnite woman, he professed himself a Sunnite. To speak with Juvaini, he adopted the course of rectitude and laid the foundation of righteousness. He sent his mother on a pilgrimage to Mecca, forbade his subjects to continue in the faith of their fathers, restored Muslim ritual law, informed the Khalif, the Shah of Khwarazm, and other Muslim potentates of the new order, built mosques, baths, and caravansaries, improved roads, invited Sunnite scholars to instruct his people, and was hailed the Neo-Muslim by the delighted Khalif Nasir.

Despite this accolade, the inhabitants of neighboring Kaswin, traditional foes of the Assassins, were skeptical. In order to convince them of the sincerity of his conversion he invited

the Kaswini to send a delegation to Alamut to inspect its renowned library and burned the works of which its members disapproved. Also for their benefit he cursed his forebears, expressing the hope that Allah might fill their graves with fire.

At first he sided with the Shah of Khwarazm but soon adhered to the Khalif, who overwhelmed him with honors. Unlike his predecessors, he remained away from Alamut, spending eighteen months as the guest and ally of the Atabeg of Arran and Azerbaijan (1214-1215). In concert with him, the Khalif, and others, he waged successful war. He married the daughters of neighboring emirs, made war, not to convert or settle new areas as had been Assassin practice, but to extract tribute, and loaned a band of fidais to the Khalif to do away with undesirable persons. Moreover, as soon as he apprehended that a new power, the Mongols, was about to descend on Islam, he sent envoys to pledge allegiance.

It would appear that the Assassins accepted Hasan's religious policy without great opposition, perhaps because the concealment of their faith was permitted and because they were not allowed to question an Imam's course.



MONGOLS [1206-1227]

In 1221 Hasan III died of dysentery and was succeeded by his nine-year-old son, Muhammad III, also known as Aladdin (Height of the Faith). Possibly to rid the court of Sunnite influence, the regent-vizir accused some of the late Imam's wives of poisoning him and executed them as well as a number of relatives and intimates.

The ritual law ceased to be enforced, and the reign of Hasan III came to be viewed as an era of occultation. While this term had theretofore been applied to intervals when the Imam was hidden, now it apparently signified that it was his true message that was concealed. Moreover, in this post-Resurrectional period it apparently came to be believed that only an elite few had actually achieved spiritual reunion with God in the Great Resurrection.

According to Juvaini, those who had adopted the law but in

their foul hearts and murky minds had clung to their evil creed now returned to their sinful and heretical ways, while those who had sincerely accepted Sunnism took fright and concealed the fact.

While Sunnites and Assassins were thus again separated, thunderclouds were looming in the eastern heavens—the Mongols. Toward the end of the twelfth century a gifted Mongol chief arose in the bleak highlands between Lake Baikal and the Great Wall of China. By 1206 this Shamanist had adopted the name Jenghiz Khan (Perfect Warrior) and united the Mongolian tribes. Then with his lacquered, leathered horsemen he pierced the Great Wall and after a shattering conflict conquered northern China. Turning westward, he extended his rule over the Turkish tribes of Central Asia.

By 1218 his empire reached the Jaxartes, the frontier of Khwarazm. Hostilities soon broke out with this powerful state and Jenghiz Khan himself advanced to the Jaxartes. The Shah of Khwarazm lined his forces on the western bank of the river, thus limiting himself to defensive action. In 1219 Jenghiz crossed the river, appeared at the rear of the Shah, annihilated his armies, and sacked Bukhara and Samarkand. The Shah fled to a Caspian isle and expired. His son, the short, dark, valorous Mankobirti, broke through the Mongol lines and fled to Ghazna to reorganize the defense. Jenghiz crossed the Oxus, pillaged Balkh, Merv, and Nishapur amid frightful slaughter, and drove Mankobirti to the Indus. Here the outnumbered Khwarazmians made a desperate stand but finally broke under the disciplined onslaught of the sons of Tartary. Mankobirti seized a fresh mount, jumped into the Indus, swam across, and fled to Delhi.

Before returning to Mongolia, Jenghiz sent eighty thousand men to invest Herat, which had ousted his governor. After six



The Deathblow. This fourteenth-century Persian miniature with strong Mongol influence shows a Mongol warrior giving the deathblow to a wounded foe (his favorite sport, to judge from his expression). [*Topkapi Sarayi, Istanbul*]

months' siege this city of clustering domes and minarets gleaming amid girdling verdure was taken by assault (1222). Over a million persons are said to have been massacred, and it was reduced to rubble.

Five years later, Jenghiz died. He left an empire that by matchless military mobility and boundless butchery he had extended from the Sea of Japan almost to the Persian Gulf, leaving behind a wake of silent sorrow and desolate blackened mounds, where once cities had flourished and children had played.



MANKOBIRTI [1225-1231]

Meanwhile, in 1225 the Shah Mankobirti had returned from India. Unable to reconquer Khwarazm and Transoxiana from the Mongols, he sought to rally Islam and to restore his rule in the mountainous regions of western Iran and Azerbaijan, where the mounted Mongols could not fight as effectively as on the plains.

Taking advantage of his diminished power, the Assassins expanded their confines, seized Damghan, and apparently even attacked Ray. Outside the walls of Ganja, where the Shah was residing, three fidais in 1226 killed a Khwarazmian officer in reprisal for raids against the Assassins of Kuhistan. Brandishing their bloody daggers and shouting the name of Aladdin, they rushed into the city to the house of the Grand Vizir. Not finding him at home, they wounded a servant to commemorate their visit and dashed into the streets, still

vociferating defiantly. Townsmen ensconced on rooftops battered the redoubtable trio with stones until they collapsed. Their dying utterances expressed pride at sacrificing themselves for their Imam.

Soon after, an Alamutine envoy to the Shah approached the city. Learning of the fidais' exploit, he wrote the Vizir to inquire whether he should appear. Hoping that the presence of an Assassin ambassador would deflect an attack on himself, the Vizir urged him to come. The two became fast friends and in 1227 a peace treaty was signed whereby the Assassins agreed to pay tribute to the Shah for Damghan.

Before the emissary's departure, he and the Vizir were enjoying the fermented product of the grape in the Shah's camp. As spirits rose, the Alamutine confided to his host that there were fidais in the Shah's army, stables, even on the staff of his chief pursuivant. Anxious to see them, the Vizir gave the plenipotentiary his kerchief in token of immunity. The legate thereupon produced five fidais. One, an Indian, informed the Vizir that he could have murdered him but had not done so because he had not yet received the order.

The Shah learned of this confrontation and, despite the Vizir's entreaties, insisted that he burn the five alive. A great fire was prepared in front of the vizirial tent and the fidais were hurled into it. As the flames began to consume their flesh, they shouted proudly that they were sacrifices for their lord Aladdin.

Later, an Alamutine envoy apprised the Vizir that if he valued his life, he would pay fifty thousand gold dinars for the incinerated fidais. Terrified, the Vizir heaped gifts and honors on the emissary and reduced the annual tribute of thirty thousand dinars for Damghan by a third for five years.

But it was difficult to preserve amity between Assassins and Khwarazmians, for the Assassins retained close relations with

the Shah's foes, the Khalif and the Mongols. Indeed, in 1228 the Khwarazmians butchered seventy Assassins of a caravan returning from Mongolia because there was a Mongolian envoy among them. Three years later the Shah was murdered by a Kurdish bandit and the Khwarazmian state ceased to exist.



ALADDIN [1221-1255]

The relatively successful foreign policy of the Assassins would seem to have been guided by a certain intelligence. Yet, according to Juvaini, when Aladdin was an adolescent, a physician for no obvious reason opened one of his veins and allowed an excessive amount of blood to flow out. His brain seemed affected and he became troubled by apparitions and melancholia. Juvaini asserts that no physician or anyone in Aladdin's entourage had the courage to identify his malady and propose treatment because, being associated with a decline in intelligence, some of his imamic commands might have been ascribed to a disturbance of the mind. As he grew older the ailment pejorated and, supplementing his lack of intelligence and education, transformed him into a madman. His condition—still according to Juvaini—was aggravated by the vain fancies of his ignorant, wretched followers, who im-

planted in his blundering brain the notion that his thoughts came from God and that he was incapable of error. Juvaini further indicates that he was so ill-bred that anyone venturing to contradict him or to mention a deficiency in the administration of his realm risked shameful mutilation, amputation of limbs, and death by torture. However that might be, Aladdin seems to have been eccentric. When he received a message from a Kaswini whom he revered, he had the bastinado administered to the bearer for presenting it to him while he was inebriated instead of waiting until he had bathed and could accept it in a befitting manner.

With his mental condition his relations with his eldest son and designated heir, Rukn al-Din (Pillar of the Faith) Khurshah, eighteen years his junior, also deteriorated. Apparently, the fact that Khurshah's word was accepted as the equivalent of his own incensed him. He sought to revoke his designation of Khurshah as heir in favor of a younger son, but the followers of Nizar and Ismail would not tolerate so flagrant a violation of their religion. Nevertheless, relations between father and son continued to worsen. Aladdin confined Khurshah to the harem, from which he could apparently emerge only when his father was intoxicated or tending his favorite flock of sheep.

Finally, in 1255, Aladdin's condition became so bad that Assassin leaders feared for Khurshah's life. Possibly they also feared Aladdin's determination to resist Mongol aggression. At all events, they swore allegiance to Khurshah, agreed to dethrone Aladdin in a manner precluding physical harm to his sacred person, and concurred that Khurshah was to seek accommodation with the Mongols.

It apparently did not prove necessary to execute their plan. One evening toward the end of 1255, in a hut near his sheepfold, Aladdin, together with some slaves, shepherds, and

camel-drivers, overimbibed and fell into a drunken stupor. At midnight his head and body, severed by an axe, were found. Of his boon companions, an Indian and a Turkoman had been wounded.

After a week it was decided that his favorite, the Sunnite Hasan of Mazandaran, was his murderer. In his childhood Hasan had been abducted from his home south of the Caspian by the Mongols, from whom he had fled to the Assassins. A handsome youth, he had attracted the attention of Aladdin, who attached him to his suite. Intimacy between the two grew. It would seem that Aladdin expressed his affection for Hasan by tormenting him, breaking his teeth, even severing a portion of his reproductive organ. According to Juvaini, even after Hasan's beard had grown and his hair had become streaked with gray, Aladdin preferred him to beardless boys. Hasan became a person of great influence at Alamut, sometimes issuing orders without consulting the Imam, and amassed a fortune. He dared not reveal his wealth to his master. Indeed, like him, he dressed in tattered wool and coarse linen and followed the favorite flock of sheep on foot. Now, apparently, his wife, who had been Aladdin's mistress, told Khurshah that her husband had beheaded the Imam. Khurshah sent Hasan to attend to the wants of his father's sheep and dispatched after him an axe-man, who killed him from behind before he could utter a word. His son and two daughters were also put to death. It was alleged that Khurshah had been privy to his father's murder.



KHURSHAH [1256-1276]

Khurshah completed an adjacent conquest in course, then sought peace with Sunnite neighbors, and urged his subjects to do likewise. He then addressed himself to the Mongol menace. Together with the Khalif, the Assassins had at first found the Mongols a convenient counterweight to powerful Khwarazm. Consequently, when the Mongols irrupted into Khurasan, they spared the Assassins' centers in Kuhistan. This immunity enabled the Assassins to offer refuge to numerous Sunnite refugees. With the extinction of Khwarazm in 1231, however, the friendly relations between Assassins and Mongols waned. This was apparent in the 1240s when Assassin ambassadors appeared in distant Karakorum, the Mongol capital, but were not received because it was feared that they plotted murder.

Furthermore, when in 1252 Hulagu, grandson of Jenghiz

Khan and brother of the Great Khan Mangu, overlord of the vast Mongol empire, set out for Persia, his instructions were to destroy the Assassins' strongholds and annihilate the sect. Four years later the leisurely prince entered Iran. An advance guard had preceded him and had attacked the Assassins in both Kuhistan and the Elburz but had failed to make appreciable headway.

Nevertheless, in view of the overwhelming Mongol power, Khurshah offered his submission to Yasur, the Mongol commander at Hamadan. Yasur replied that Khurshah must appear before Hulagu. Khurshah sent a brother to Hulagu's camp in Khurasan, while Yasur invaded the Alamut area in June 1256. Khurshah's soldiers and fidais occupied a mountaintop northeast of Alamut. Yasur was unable to dislodge them and withdrew, destroying crops as he went.

Hulagu, who between bacchanalia was moving slowly westward, informed Khurshah that he would not hold him accountable for his father's crimes, provided he destroy all his strongholds and submit to him in person. Khurshah began to dismantle some fortresses but asked that venerable Alamut and Lamasar be spared and that he be granted a year's time to complete the demolition before appearing before Hulagu to do homage. The negotiations were still proceeding when Hulagu arrived before the Castle of Maimundiz, where Khurshah was staying, and demanded his surrender.

Advised by non-Assassin scholars, notably the astronomer and philosopher Tusi, who informed him that the stars were portentous, Khurshah decided to submit. Consequently, in November 1256 the Imam, his family, his entourage, and his treasure descended to Hulagu's camp. But when the Mongols sought to enter the castle they encountered a small, devout band of Assassins who refused to surrender and resisted until all were killed.



This fifteenth-century miniature of the Mongol attack on Alamut adorns a manuscript of *The World Conqueror* by Juvaini (d. 1283). [Photo, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris]

In the interim, Hulagu, who had secretly put to death the Inam's emissaries, received Khurshah graciously and distributed his treasure to his warriors. Learning of Khurshah's passion for camel-fighting, he presented him with a hundred Bactrian camels. Later, Khurshah saw a comely Mongol girl in the invaders' camp. He avowed himself willing to give a

kingdom for her hand. He was perhaps expressing himself more aptly than he realized, and Hulagu fulfilled his wish.

Lodging Khurshah's household and animals in Kaswin, Hulagu took the Imam with him to command in person or in writing the surrender of the Assassins' castles. About a hundred in the Elburz and in Kuhistan were evacuated and demolished and their garrisons slaughtered by the Mongols. Khurshah even wrote to the Assassins in Syria to deliver their castles whenever the Mongols should appear.

When the Mongol host reached Alamut, Khurshah exhorted the commander to yield the heart of Assassinism to the Mongols. Assuming that his Imam was acting under pressure, the commander refused. After a few days, however, he changed his mind and in December 1256 capitulated. After Juvaini, who was in Hulagu's service, had examined the library, burned its undesirable books, and preserved other

The Rock of Girdkuh, where the Assassins beat off the Mongols for fourteen years until 1270. [*Photo by Dr. Laurence Lockhart, whose skill as a photographer rivals his achievements as a scholar and traveler*]



items, including astronomical instruments, the Mongols began the long and arduous task of leveling the venerable citadel. This was a task worthy of Hercules. The fortifications seemed built for eternity, the water supply flowed through solid rock, the arsenal was impressively equipped, the caves and cisterns were plentifully stocked with edible food (some dating from the time of Hasan Sabbah). Under a resolute leader Alamut and other castles might well have resisted the sons of Tartary, as they had those of Turkestan.

Indeed, Lamasar, Girdkuh, and certain Kuhistani forts held out for varying periods, Girdkuh until 1270. If isolated strongholds could withstand the Mongols for years, a united resistance might well have elicited better terms from the invaders and ultimately have saved many Assassin lives.

However that might be, continuing his policy of conciliation with the Mongols, Khurshah requested the privilege of meeting the Great Khan. He was sent off on the long journey to Karakorum with a troop of Mongols. The Great Khan, however, refused to receive him on the ground that all the Assassins' castles had not been delivered. On the homeward journey, in 1257, his guards led him and his attendants away from the road, kicked them to a pulp, and sabered them to death. His family and household in Kaswin were also slaughtered by the ruthless Mongols, who then sought to extirpate the sect by a general bloodbath of Assassins, including babes in arms. Unsympathetic, Juvaini wrote that the world had been laved of the evil that had polluted it. A wind seemed to have died.

Juvaini was mistaken. In 1275 Assassins recaptured Alamut, which the Mongols either had not succeeded in razing or had rebuilt. The following year the mighty Mongols crushed the gallant garrison. In later centuries Alamut became a prison for state captives. Today little but cisterns and foundations remain.



MAMELUKES [1257-1291]

Satisfied that he had annihilated the hated heretics, Hulagu advanced to Baghdad, the center of Muslim orthodoxy. Here reigned the fifty-fourth Sunnite Khalif, Mustasim, now an independent sovereign with a large army and a strongly walled capital. He rejected Hulagu's demand that he acknowledge Mongol overlordship, and in January 1258 Hulagu invested the city. A month later, with the eastern wall crumbling, the Khalif and his retinue emerged from the city and surrendered. After they had given up their weapons, they were butchered except for the Khalif, who was trampled to death by steppe horses after he had revealed the site of his treasure.

Within the city only the Christians, who assembled in their churches, were spared. Venerated Muslim centers of religion were defiled. Countless treasures of art, science, and letters

were destroyed. Baghdadis of both sexes, who had theretofore led sheltered lives, were exposed, shamed, ravished, enslaved. Eight hundred thousand were indiscriminately slaughtered, those who submitted as well as those who resisted, defenseless women and fighting men, playing babes and tottering gray-beards. The crown of the Khalifate was reduced to a heap of decomposing heads and bodies whose stench drove out even the savage sons of Tartary.

Late in 1259 Hulagu led his host into Syria. Here, after Sinan's death in 1193, the Assassins had again come under the direct control of Alamut.

In 1228 a messenger of Frederick II, the brilliant and enlightened Holy Roman Emperor, King of Sicily, titular King of Jerusalem, and leader of the Sixth Crusade, had sent a sum of money to the chief dai of the Syrian Assassins for transmission to Alamut. In return the chief dai gave him his shirt as a token of amity and protection.

The following year Frederick II crowned himself King in Jerusalem, which, together with Bethlehem, Nazareth, and a corridor to the sea, he had regained from the Sultan of Egypt by negotiation. It was to be lost again to the Sultan in 1244 and not to return to Christian hands until the British General Allenby captured it from the Osmanli Turks in 1917.

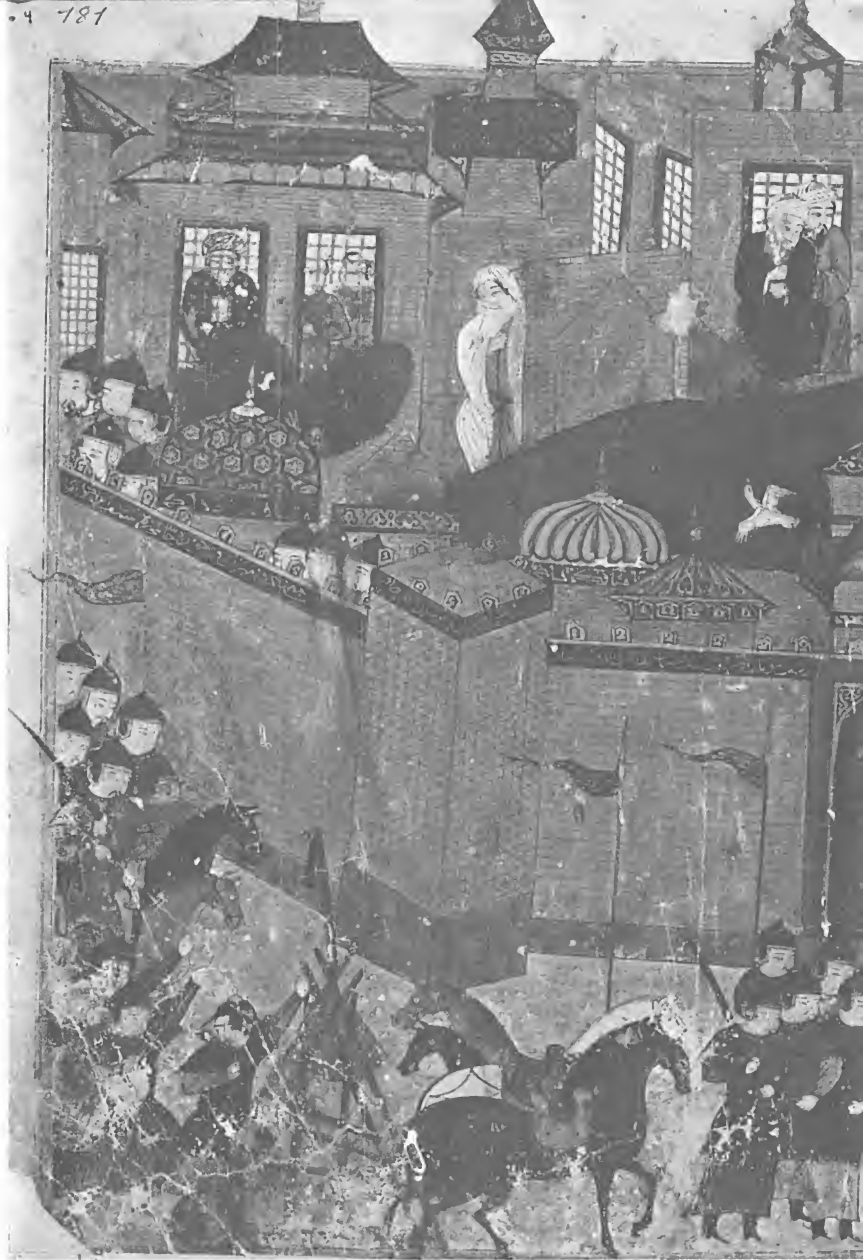
In 1250 Assassin envoys visited the King of France, Saint Louis, in Acre, whither he had retired after the ill-fated Seventh Crusade in Egypt. Significantly bearing daggers and a shroud, they urged him to follow the example of the Holy Roman Emperor, the King of Hungary, and the Sultan of Egypt and to subsidize the Assassins or at least to command the Templars and the Hospitallers to relinquish the tribute. The emissaries were confronted with the grand masters of the two orders, who refused to remit the tribute and told them to return with a contribution. A fortnight later they came back

with the chief dai's shirt, a ring, a crystal elephant, a crystal giraffe, and a game of chess. In response Saint Louis sent to the chief dai a friar with gifts, including jewelry, scarlet material, and golden goblets. The friar, who was gratified that the Old Man of the Mountain (the chief dai) held Saint Peter in the highest esteem, noted that whenever he appeared in public a herald called upon all to bow before the one who carried the death of kings in his hands.

In 1259, nine years after the Assassins' intercourse with Saint Louis, Hulagu advanced into Syria, stormed Aleppo, massacred the Muslims, and spared the Christians. Those of his officers who had been wounded were consoled by his observation that, much as a rose-tinted complexion adorns a woman, there was no more noble or beautiful ornament for an officer than a face and beard ensanguined in his august service.

In March 1260 his general, Kitboga, a Nestorian Christian, entered Damascus flanked by his allies, the Christian King of Cilician Armenia and the Christian Prince of Antioch. When, however, Hulagu's envoy appeared in Cairo to demand the submission of the Mameluke Sultan, he was put to death and the Mameluke army entered Palestine.

Mongols and Mamelukes met at Goliath's Springs near Nazareth in 1260. The Mongol horsemen charged confidently into the Egyptian center, which gave way. The Egyptian flanks closed in, and the sons of Tartary were annihilated. A decisive battle had been fought. Not only did it result in the expulsion of the Mongols from Syria, but by preserving Egypt as a powerful Muslim state, it assured ultimate Islamic dominance of the Middle East. Before the victorious Mameluke Sultan had reached Cairo, he was stabbed in the back by his emir Baibars, who replaced him on the sultanic throne (October 1260).



This two-paged miniature from a manuscript of Rashid al-Din Tabib's *History of the Mongols* (completed in 1310) shows the Mongol ballistae erected to hurl the last missiles at Baghdad in



February 1258. On the right the last Abbasid Khalif of Baghdad may be seen leaving his palace to cross the Tigris and surrender to Hulagu. [Photo, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris]

Now about fifty, Baibars was a tall, coarse, powerful, unscrupulous Turk of the Russian steppe who as a young man had been purchased for the Egyptian Sultan's guards, had shown military ability, and had risen to eminence. He restored the Abbasid dynasty as ornamental Khalifs in Cairo, where they were to perform ceremonial functions until the Osmanli conquest in 1517. Baibars extended his suzerainty in all directions. Above all, he brought Syria under his sway. He held Damascus and Aleppo, further reduced the Latin littoral, and in 1268 took Antioch amid great carnage.

He also devoted his attentions to the Syrian Assassins. While they had fought against the Mongols, four castellans had surrendered their strongholds to them. After the battle of Goliath's Springs these castles were regained and the officers who had relinquished them were executed. First Baibars subjected the Assassins to the tribute they had theretofore paid to the Hospitallers. In 1270 he began appointing their grand masters and by 1273 had occupied all their castles. Unlike Hulagu, he made no attempt to exterminate them. On the contrary, he and his successors employed *fidais* to exterminate bothersome persons.

The unsuccessful attempt on the life of that bitter foe of the Assassins, Juvaini, in 1271, when he was governor of Baghdad, may have been of sectarian origin, although it must be remembered that as an official of the Mongols he was also an enemy of Baibars.

The same year, the future King Edward I of England landed at Acre on the last Crusade in the Holy Land. He ignored the treaty that Baibars had made with Hugh III, King of Cyprus and titular King of Jerusalem, that stipulated a peace lasting ten years, ten months, ten days, and ten hours beginning in April 1272. Indeed, he hoped, as had Saint Louis, to combine with the Mongols to crush the Sultan of Egypt and

regain Jerusalem. On Baibar's instructions the Mameluke governor of Ramleh sent the English prince a fidai disguised as a Levantine Latin with gifts for his wife, himself, and his retinue, hinting that he was prepared to betray the Sultan. The fidai remained at Edward's court and, finding him alone with his interpreter on a June day of 1272, stabbed him five times. The Assassin was immediately killed, but the Prince survived.

Nineteen years later, in 1291, Acre fell to the Sultan of Egypt. It was the last Latin holding in the Holy Land. Christendom's great reconquest, begun almost two centuries earlier, had come to an end.

The Syrian Assassins were also declining. After the thirteenth century their only recorded assassinations are those made for hire. Indeed, in the fourteenth century the famous Moorish traveler Ibn Battuta made no reference to a Grand Master and reported that the fidais were in the employ of the Sultan of Egypt. He also indicated that they wielded poisoned poniards.¹⁹

The terror that the Assassins inspired lived on. As late as the sixteenth century, when assassination in the name of religion had become relatively common in Europe, murders were falsely attributed to them.

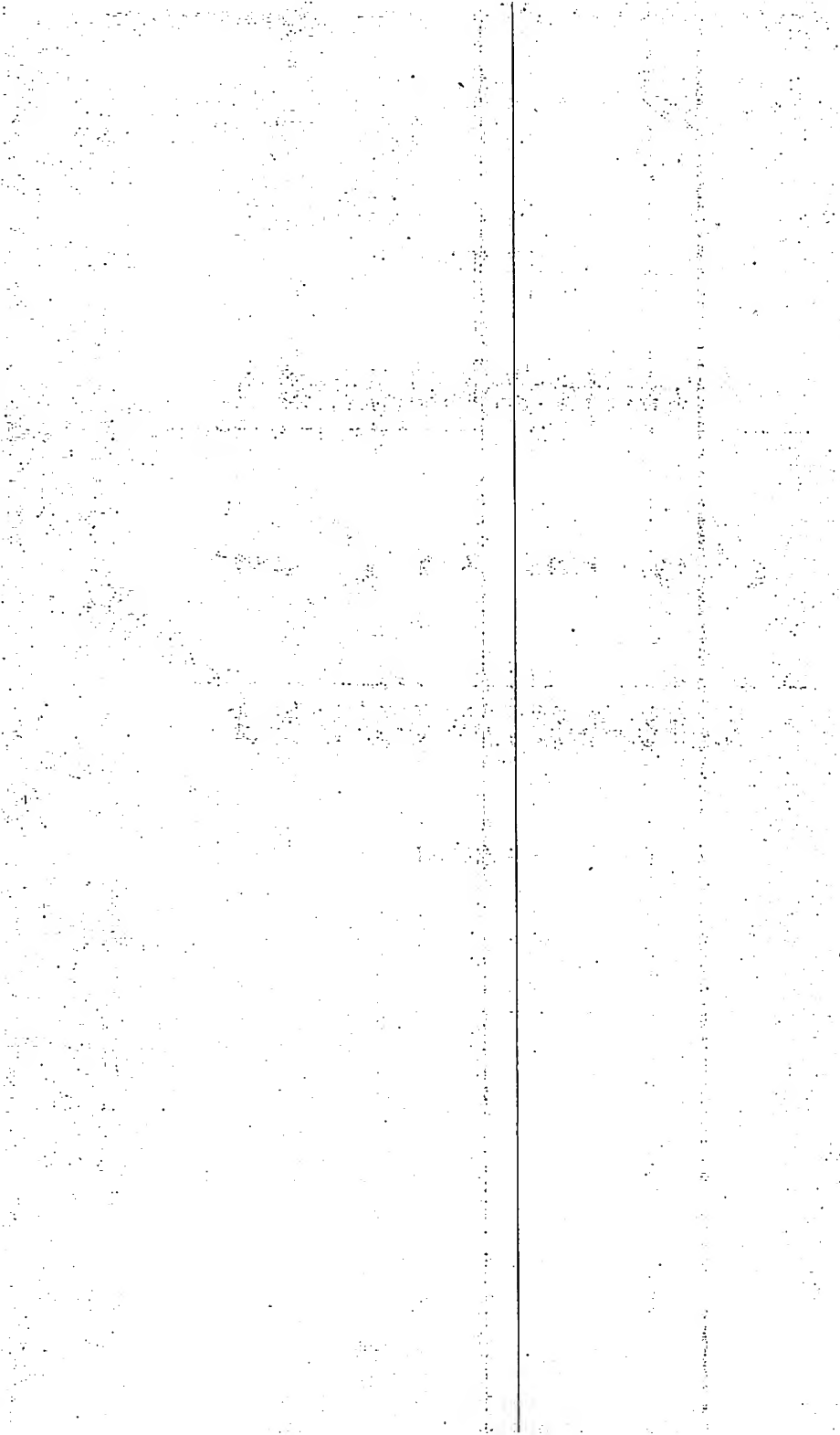
1256-1841



Dynasts in Iran



SEVEN





MONGOLS AND TIMUR [1256-1405]

It would be difficult to portray too sharply the lethal effects of the Mongol invasion of Persia. Its ancient cities had survived the Arab and Turkish conquests and in them the antique Persian civilization had lived on. Then the monstrous Mongol hosts descended on Transoxiana, Iran, and Irak, indiscriminately butchering those who resisted, those who surrendered, and those to whom they had promised immunity. Ruthlessly exterminating young and old, male and female, they obliterated cities with their denizens, their schools, their mosques, their palaces, their libraries, their art treasures, largely nomadizing the region. They wrecked the ancient irrigation system of Irak, once known as one of the four terrestrial paradises because of its fertility. Under the impact of the death and destruction, the horror and the havoc of the Mongol invasion, following the long struggle against Assassins and Crusaders,

eastern Islam, which had in general been tolerant, expansive, and inquiring, became narrow, rigid, and averse to new ideas.²⁰ The destruction of Alamut with its renowned library and the massacre of the Assassins were but part of the common tragedy of Islam.

On the ruins of the Khalifate and other Islamic states Hulagu established the Mongol Ilkhanate, nominally subject to the Great Khan at Peking. Hulagu and later Ilkhans sought to expand into Syria but were beaten back by the Mamelukes of Egypt. Nor were the Mongols able to preserve order within their own realm, even after they adopted Islam in 1295. Thus, during the fourteenth century the Ilkhanate dissolved into a congeries of rival states.

After mid-century the gloomy Turko-Tatar Muslim Timur, a large man with a big head, hair that is said to have been white since birth, and a leg later lamed by an arrow, gained control of his native Transoxiana. In 1381 he invaded Iran. After two decades of revolting butchery, during which time he extirpated many cities and built many pyramids of human heads, he was supreme from India to Syria. He died in 1405 and his empire insensibly disintegrated. Timurids retained eastern Iran, while Turkomans, quaintly known as White Sheep and Black Sheep, conquered Irak and western Iran.



SAFAVIDS AND KAJARS [1500–1800]

In Azerbaijan lived a saintly family, the Safavids. They claimed descent from Ali through Musa and were hereditary heads of a Sufi religious order. The chief of this family, Ismail, who commanded seventy thousand Turkoman horsemen known as the Red Heads, defeated the White Sheep in 1502. Ten years later he had conquered Persia from Irak to Khurasan and proclaimed Shiism the state religion.

The rise of the Safavids marked the emergence of Persia as a national state after eight and a half centuries of Arab, Turkish, and Mongol domination. Although under intermittent but heavy pressure of the Sunnite Osmanli Turks at the zenith of their power, the Sunnite Usbeg Turkomans of Transoxiana, the Sunnite Moguls of India, and later Romanov Russia, the Shiite Safavid shahs gave Persia an era of relative stability. Indeed, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Ira-



A Safavid Prince. Despite the Arab and Seljuk conquests and the unspeakable horrors of the Mongol and Timurid subjugations, Persian art not only survived but even engendered periods of wondrous splendor. Such was the Safavid era, when this idealized mid-sixteenth-century portrait of a young dynast wearing the high Safavid turban with two egrets was painted. [*Courtesy, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Fund, Goloubew Collection*]

nians, Turks, and Arabs began to merge into Persians. It was also a golden age of Persian art, rivaling the most creative Sassanid and Abbasid periods. Multicolored tiled shrines and palaces, set in charming gardens with refreshing pools, came into being. Textile and rug weaving almost attained perfection. And the poetry and miniatures of the time still portray for us the gentle amenities of life under the Safavids.

Moreover, after the Portuguese had rounded the Cape of Good Hope in 1487, Persia came into direct, if not always amical, contact with Europe through the Persian Gulf.

Early in the eighteenth century the Safavid dynasty collapsed under the blows of Osmanli Turks, Russians, and rebellious Sunnite Afghans. Out of the turmoil rose a great military leader, once the head of a robber band, who became Shahanshah in 1736—Nadir Shah. He restored, even expanded Persian confines. But his military exploits were not paralleled by wise domestic policies, and in 1747 he was sabered by his officers.

In the confusion following his death Afghanistan became independent, while tribal leaders established regional authority throughout Persia. Later, a chief of the nomadic Zand tribe gained control of southern Iran, extended his sway over the greater part of the realm, and restored order.

About 1780 Aga Muhammad, head of the Turkoman Kajar tribe of northern Iran, began to conquer Persia. A foe of his family had castrated him as a child and thereby apparently also mutilated his character. Enraged by the resistance of the city of Kerman, he had the eyes of its defenders torn out. It is reported that he counted seven thousand eyes personally and assured the officer in charge of the operation that had one been missing, his own would have been added to the pile. The women and children of the city he turned over to his warriors. He blinded the last of the Zands, inflicted bestial brutalities on

him, and erected a pyramid of heads at Bam to commemorate the downfall of the dynasty. He exhumed and reburied the corpse of another rival of his house under the threshold of his palace at Teheran, where it might daily be trod underfoot. This petty performance did not deter his reuniting the kingdom, and by the time of his assassination in 1797 the wrinkled old eunuch had created modern territorial Persia, that is, Iran without Mesopotamia, Afghanistan, and Baluchistan. His nephew Fath Ali succeeded to the Peacock Throne.

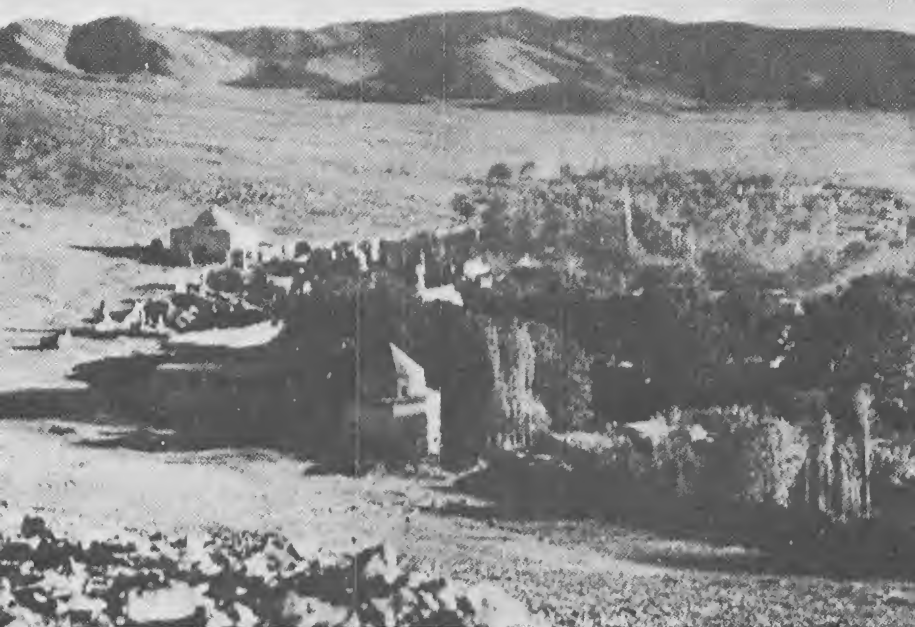


HIDDEN IMAMS [1256-1817]

The belief that Hulagu had wiped out the Assassins and the Imam's entire family proved false. Some Assassins fled to the Upper Oxus, the Himalayas, and India. Others resorted to the permitted practice of denying their faith when in jeopardy and survived in isolated communities difficult to identify.

Moreover, according to Assassin tradition, before the Mongol conquest Khurshah had sent away his seven-year-old son, Shams al-Din (Sun of the Faith) Muhammad. Earning his living as an embroiderer, this Imam lived in apparent obscurity in Azerbaijan and died about 1310. He and his descendants, often in the guise of Sufi chiefs, kept their sacred line alive and continued to send out dais.

It was during the Imamate of Shams' grandson Islam Shah that Timur descended on Iran and sought to extirpate the Assassins. He was no more successful than Hulagu. The



Anjudan, now Aragh, about thirty miles from Mahallat, where hidden Imams lived for a time during the dark centuries after the Mongol conquest. Two mausolea of Imams who died in the late fifteenth century are visible on the left. [From W. Ivanow, "*Tombs of Some Persian Imams*," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bombay*, XIV, 1938]

Imams remained in concealment and sent out their dais, who were especially effective in India.

In the fifteenth century the Imams were landowners in a dry, hilly, thinly populated region southwest of Teheran. One of them, Mustansir billah II (Seeker of Help from God), is buried in a domed octagonal mausoleum in the village of Anjudan, now Aragh.

Upon the accession of the Shiite Safavids to the Persian throne in 1502 persecution of the Assassins declined. The Imams were thus able to restore direct control over remote



Yazd. The twelfth-century sun-dried-brick walls of the rainless but immaculate desert city, where the last of the Sassanids found a fleeting refuge from the invading Arabs in the seventh century and where to this day ten thousand Zarathustrans still tend the sacred flame of the primeval Iranian religion. It was here that in 1817 the Imam Khalillulah III was murdered by a mob. [*Photo by Otis Taylor. From Arthur U. Pope, ed., A Survey of Persian Art (New York: Oxford University Press, 1938-1939), through the courtesy of Jay Gluck*]

communities, which had acquired a certain autonomy. The Imam Shah Nizar, who died in 1722, lies entombed in a domed sepulcher outside the village of Kahak near Mahallat, about twenty miles beyond the hills from Anjudan. Villagers show the gardens of the Imams in Kahak. In a small hollow is a stone platform. It is said that the Imam would sit on this platform, which was surrounded by water, when giving audience. His guests would be placed amid flower beds on the other side of the water. Apparently the imamic residence was destroyed in the turmoil following the collapse of the Safavid dynasty in 1722, although a country house just outside Kahak was occupied by imamic kin until about 1920.

According to Assassin tradition, another Imam, known as Hasan Beg, was an associate of Nadir Shah and participated in the invasion of India in 1738. Another Imam, Abul Hasan Kahaki, was Governor of Kerman and probably acquired

property in that city. He is said to have died in 1780 and to have been interred there.

He was succeeded by his son Khalillulah III, who seems to have acquired the at least tacit recognition of the Shahanshah Fath Ali Shah as head of the Assassins. For a time he resided at Yazd, to which town came many pilgrims to seek his blessing. Those who could also acquired clippings of his hair and nails and the water in which he had washed. He remunerated his servants with his old clothes, of which they sold cuttings to pilgrims at high prices. One day in 1817 the mullahs (teachers of Islamic law) led a mob to his house. According to one account the mullahs of Yazd resented his popularity even among the non-Assassin Shiites. Another version is that the townsmen took umbrage at his support of the extortionate governor. At all events, only after they had killed a bitterly fighting converted Hindu wrestler could they reach the sacred person of the Imam, whom they slew forthwith.



FIRST AGA KHAN IN IRAN [1817-1841]

It is said that the Shah Fath Ali feared that the Assassins might avenge themselves on him. Whatever may have been his motive, he put to death the murderers with torture and indignity. Their leader was stripped naked, hurled into a freezing pond, and whipped to death with thorny sticks. The Shah, furthermore, bestowed on Khalillulah's son the Imam Hasan Ali lands, recognition as head of the Assassins, the title of Aga Khan, the hand of his daughter, and the governorship of Kerman.

There is extant an account of a pilgrimage to him in 1836 during his sojourn at Kerman. A family of six sailed from Bombay with about a hundred other pilgrims and landed at Bander Abbas, a small port at the entrance of the Persian Gulf. The pilgrims carried with them oblations for the Imam in coin and costly materials worth about two thousand pounds

sterling. At Bandar Abbas they waited for other pilgrims to arrive. When about five hundred had gathered, they undertook the perilous three-week journey across the mountains to Kerman, where they were lodged at the Imam's expense in a large rude structure built around three sides of a great open court. They presented their offerings and remained several weeks in Kerman. During this time they were admitted to the presence of the Imam about a dozen times. On these occasions, they beheld his face, kissed his hand, and retired. The pilgrimage cost the family about five hundred pounds sterling.²¹

Meanwhile, in 1834, Fath Ali's black-bearded, corpulent grandson Muhammad Shah had assumed the royal egret. The next year the spare, wrinkled, scanty-bearded Hadji* Mirza Aghassy became prime minister. He looked somewhat like a medieval magician. When he left the city of Teheran, however, a cavalry saber always clanked at his side and two huge pistols projected from his sash. His admirers called him the Richelieu of Persia; he perhaps fancied himself its Napoleon. He had been a mullah and tutor of the Shah, of whom he observed that teaching him resembled driving a nail into stone. Nevertheless, the Shah venerated him and occasionally asked him to perform miracles. Hadji allowed that on Fridays he ascended to the sixth or seventh heaven to discuss affairs of state with Allah, and the Shah was seen seeking to observe his empyreal journey with a telescope.

Hadji had a somewhat disquieting sense of humor. He referred to his sons as the offspring of a hussy and a dog. He would occasionally order a gala review of the cavalry in sumptuous array and arrive in rags on an undersized ass. He

* "Hadji" is a title borne by persons who have made the pilgrimage (*hadj*) to Mecca.



The Hadji Mirza Aghassy, Prime Minister of Persia from 1835 to 1848, who admitted that the world had seldom seen his equal. [From *Joseph P. Ferrier, Caravan Journeys* (London: John Murray, 1856); from a Persian drawing]

had two passions, agriculture and artillery. For the former, it was alleged, he constructed irrigation canals that conducted no water; for the latter, cannon for which there were no artillerymen.

He admitted that the world had seldom seen his equal, that he could have twisted Napoleon around his little finger, that while Plato and Aristotle might have been wise, he was no ass. When an Isfahani donkey-driver, who had been working on the canals near Teheran, accosted him and requested his pay, Hadji informed him that Isfahanis were fit only to perish. The driver replied to Hadji, who was of Turkish descent, that he

might be an Isfahani deserving only to die, but that his donkeys were Turks and should not starve to death. His pay was forthcoming.

Hadji's official instructions were often conceived in picturesque terms. Thus, an order to a customs functionary to pay a sum owed the Russian ministry began by calling the bureaucrat in question a thief, a rascal, and the son of a whore and threatened to belabor him with sticks, violate his wives and his mother, and burn his father. In striking contrast to this communication is a letter that Hadji addressed to the French ambassador, calling him an illustrious, powerful, glorious, splendid luminary, endowed with vigor and energy, cream of the great nation of Jesus, flower of the eminent men of the Messiah's religion, precious, tender, and honored friend.²²

Hadji was not amused when the connubial proposal of a protégé of his for the hand of the Aga Khan's daughter was contemptuously rejected by the Aga Khan, who considered the suitor too lowborn to be worthy of an alliance with his august family. As a result of this rebuff, intense animosity between Hadji and the Aga Khan developed, and in 1837 the latter, supported by Assassin horsemen and nomadic allies and apparently supplied with arms and funds from Bombay,²³ seized the fortress of Bam on the edge of the Great Desert and proclaimed the independence of the almost riverless province of Kerman.

Defeated and captured by the provincial governor, he was sent to Teheran, where he apparently convinced the Shah of his good intentions and was permitted to retire to his extensive estates in Mahallat.

In 1840 the restless Imam was again at the head of his horsemen in Kerman. The Shah sent two officials to arrest him. He ordered the hands of one of them to be hacked off and pardoned the other. For a spell he waged successful warfare,



Bam. The sun-dried-brick citadel which was seized by the first Aga Khan when he rose against the Shah of Persia in 1837. [From Arthur U. Pope, ed., *A Survey of Persian Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1938-1939), through the courtesy of Jay Gluck]

defeating the Shah's brother, the Governor of Yazd, many of whose men were Assassins and deserted to him. Eventually superior royal forces with artillery defeated him. Hoping that the British might help him gain his lost realm, possibly even the Peacock Throne, he fled eastward in August 1841 with a hundred horsemen to the British forces occupying Kandahar.



FIRST AGA KHAN IN AFGHANISTAN [1841-1842]

Perhaps the reasons for the Aga Khan's insurrection had not been entirely personal. Britain and Russia were both seeking to extend their influence in the area. Encouraged by Russia, the Shah of Persia had in 1837 invested thickly walled Herat. This Afghan city on the western slopes of the Paropamisus, which was encompassed by the ruins of an earlier day when it had been the wonder of the Orient, was held by an Afghan prince.

The British government feared that if a Persian monarch under Russian influence acquired the city, it would be Russia's first step on the road to India. Consequently, Britain dispatched an artillery officer to aid in its defense, seized the Island of Kharag in the Persian Gulf, and probably sponsored the insurgence of the Aga Khan.

Afghanistan had come into being after the assassination of

the Persian Shah Nadir Shah in 1747. One of his generals, the Afghan Ahmad Khan, assumed among other titles that of Pearl of Pearls and made himself independent in northeastern Iran (Afghanistan). Dominated by the snowclad Hindu Kush, the watershed between the Oxus and the Indus, to a large extent plagued by winds, aridity, and extremes of heat and cold, these barren highlands and narrow valleys are inhabited by mixed Turkish, Indian, Iranian, and Mongol tribesmen, who are mainly Sunnites and most of whom speak an archaic Persian.

Although the Pearl of Pearls extended his suzerainty over eastern Persia, Baluchistan, Kashmir, and the Punjab, his dynasty lost these acquisitions, lapsed into family strife about 1800, and in 1818 lost the throne. Turmoil ensued and the country broke into fragments. A new leader, Dost Muhammad, emerged as ruler of the area around Kabul.

In 1838 the British Governor-General of India, Lord Auckland, rejected Dost's amical overtures and peremptorily demanded that he expel the Russian representative from Kabul and renounce all claims to Kashmir and the Punjab. Upon Dost's rejection of these demands, a British-Indian force of twenty-one thousand men invaded Afghanistan, in 1839 restored as their puppet a dynast who had been expelled thirty years earlier, and in 1840 sent Dost into Indian captivity. But the Afghans resented the British aggression and uprose under Dost's son Akbar Khan.

The British were thus engaged in hostilities with Afghan tribesmen when in August 1841 the dust-covered Aga Khan with his mounted Assassins rode into Kandahar and placed his sword at their disposal. No doubt he hoped thereby to place the British under the obligation to aid him in his Persian designs. For this, however, circumstances were not favorable. The Shah had abandoned the siege of Herat, and Britain and

Persia were on the point of resuming diplomatic relations. Nevertheless, the British granted the Aga Khan and his detachment (soon increased to two hundred) a monthly allowance and allotted him Afghan territory with a revenue of forty thousand rupees a year.



Dost Muhammad Khan, Amir of Afghanistan and founder of the Barakzai Dynasty. [*From Mohan Lal, Life of the Amir Dost Muhammad of Kabul (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1846)*]

Apparently unperturbed by the contrary political juncture, the Aga Khan offered to conquer Persia, occupied spacious quarters, contracted debts, and gave frequent parties. In 1842 an English chaplain attended one of these. On a carpeted platform with a couch in an open lantern-lighted court, the thick-bearded Aga Khan, plainly clothed and in high Persian fur headdress, graciously received his guests. He teased "the

English mullah" about the scantiness of his beard, expressed amazement that a person of the cloth should caress a spaniel, and learning that his sacred calling did not forbid the consumption of alcoholic beverages, ordered an assortment thereof. "The English mullah" found them abominable. This was probably because not only were the production and consumption of wine prohibited in Kandahar, but the British occupation had led to a scarcity. However bad the beverages, the parson noticed that the Aga Khan consumed them with amazing facility. He also observed that the numerous servants, who stood on the ground around the platform, were under no restraint. They conversed and laughed freely, commented on the Imam's jokes and those of his guests, and later, when dinner was served, helped themselves to a large portion of the food before passing it to the diners. Periodically a hookah would be passed around, of which those who smoked took a few whiffs. To entertain his guests, the Aga Khan called for a singer with a shrill, nasal voice and a wild-looking man with a guitar, who could play only after taking opium. That their performance was inferior mattered little, since no one paid attention to them.

In due course, water was passed for the diners to wash their hands. Then a large oval cake of bread about an inch thick was placed before each diner to serve as food, plate, and napkin. Dish after dish—rice, pilaf, kebabs, stewed meats, curries, eggs, etc.—into which the servants had already plunged their hands, was placed on the couch. The diners helped themselves with their hands, placing the food on their bread cakes. "The English mullah" soon found that the chair that had been provided for him rendered it difficult to reach the couch for food and joined the other guests sitting cross-legged on the carpeted floor. Upon completion of the repast, the servants poured water over the diners' hands and served



Hasan Ali Shah of Mahallat, forty-sixth Imam and first Aga Khan (1800-1881). [From the *Ismailia Association for Pakistan*, Souvenir Commemorating the Historic and Auspicious Occasion of His Royal Highness Prince Aga Khan's Platinum Jubilee (Karachi, 1954)]

tea. The evening was terminated with a farewell round of the hookah.²⁴

In the north, as the year 1841 drew to a close, the situation of the forty-five hundred British and Indian troops in the cantonment outside Kabul had become untenable. It was decided to head for the mountain passes leading to British-held Jalalabad a hundred thirty miles to the east. Consequently, in January 1842 the seven hundred British soldiers and thirty-eight hundred sepoy moved out of their quarters

into intense cold and deep snow, accompanied by twelve thousand camp-followers, who mingled with them and hampered their march and their discipline.

They were attacked by Afghan tribesmen enraged by the invasion of their country. Blood began to redden the snow and corpses to mark the route. By nightfall of the first day only five miles had been covered, and the despondent multitude lay down in the snow, some to be crippled by frostbite, others to freeze to death.

After another sanguinary day and another deathly night the fugitives entered the dark, narrow Koord-Kabul Pass. From its precipitous sides the Afghan tribesmen directed their fire into the confused mass of soldiers, women, children, horses, and camels. Leaving three thousand dead and dying in the tragic gorge, the dazed survivors stumbled on to spend another shelterless, heatless, hungry night in the snow, hundreds never to rise again.

The following day, after consigning the married and wounded officers, together with their wives and children, to the protection of Akbar Khan, who seemed unable to control the tribesmen, the doomed debris moved feebly forward through a nightmare of snow, ice, cold, hunger, snowblindness, knives, and bullets. Three quarters of those who had left Kabul were no longer with them.

Six days after their departure the starving British-Indian combatants had been reduced to a hundred fifty. Suddenly, in a dark, declivitous defile these numbed survivors, still encumbered by camp-followers, confronted a branch barrier. In a moment tribesmen were swarming around them. Fearful carnage ensued.

Only twenty British officers and forty-five British soldiers broke through the barricade and pushed on. At daybreak they were surrounded and wiped out.

Six officers who had ridden ahead reached a point sixteen miles from Jalalabad. They were attacked. Only one, Dr. Brydon, escaped. Weak and wounded, he reached Jalalabad to divulge that within the space of a week a British army had ceased to exist and sixteen thousand persons had perished or been captured.

Meanwhile, in the south the Aga Khan, who in addition to his two hundred horsemen commanded a hundred other Shiite riders, saw action. On one occasion, in March 1842, when the Afghan and Persian cavalry in British service had fled, he and his followers cut their way through the encircling Afghan tribesmen to an adjoining hill, determined to fight to the end. Halfway up the hill he dismounted and shot the Afghan leader dead. In the ensuing confusion he was able to extricate his force. At another juncture he rendered the British rearguard exceptional service in driving off an attack.

Late in May 1842 some six thousand Afghan tribesmen occupied rocky hills near Kandahar. General William Nott, taking artillery, moved out of the city and attacked them. The Aga Khan and his horsemen were with the right wing. He and Major Henry Rawlinson at the head of their riders charged headlong into the tribesmen of the enemy right flank and drove them into flight, thus completing the rout of the wavering Afghans, who withdrew across the river. The threat to Kandahar was removed.

In the interim the holocaust of the Hindu Kush had stunned British India. Its sequel had come in April 1842 when the British puppet ruler of Afghanistan was murdered. Lord Auckland was replaced by Lord Ellenborough as Governor-General. It was determined to abandon the attempt to establish a protectorate over Afghanistan with a display of British power.

Relieving troops marched into beleaguered Jalalabad in

April 1842, while the garrison band played "Ye've been lang a'comin'." Then British-Indian troops fought their way through the passes of the Hindu Kush over the skeletons of the tragic week in January and in September entered Kabul.



Akbar Khan, Dost Muhammad's son, who carried on the war against the British invaders after his father's surrender, killed the British representative in Afghanistan, Sir William Macnaghten, in December 1841, and saved the lives of a number of British officers and their families on the tragic retreat from Kabul in January 1842. Later he involved his country in war with a neighboring potentate by abducting a comely youth belonging to him. In 1848 a Hindu physician gave him two poisoned pills, assuring him that they had aphrodisiac properties. He died three hours later after violent convulsions. [From Mohan Lal, *Life of the Amir Dost Mohammad of Kabul* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1846)]

Possibly it is of this campaign that the tale is told of the Scotsman who never spared a life. Afghan women generally cried "Aman" (mercy). He understood this to be a request for "a mon" and esteemed immediate dispatch condign correction for such brazen conduct.²⁵

Meanwhile, the British obtained the release of the persons who had been entrusted to Akbar Khan. Then, to punish the Afghans for failing to appreciate the benefits of British dominion, the grand bazaar of Kabul was blown up, while British-Indian soldiers and camp-followers burned, pillaged, and butchered. After this demonstration, apparently designed to restore British prestige, the British evacuated Afghanistan (October 1842).

They had already withdrawn from Kandahar in August. Normally, the Aga Khan, who had rendered them important services in retaining the good will of their Shiite allies and in diffusing distrust among their foes, would have accompanied them. Indeed, the British departure exposed him to possible Afghan vengeance. But he was financially embarrassed, for his allowance from the British was in arrears and they refused to advance him funds. As a result, though in jeopardy, he remained in Kandahar six weeks after the British evacuation. At length, he was able to borrow twenty thousand rupees from two local merchants, leaving his brother Mirza Abul Hasan as security. Thereupon he and his faithful horsemen rode out of Kandahar and headed for Sind and new adventures.

The First Afghan War inspired many Afghans with dislike and distrust of Europeans, while it showed the sepoy that their British masters were not invincible and possibly underlay their sanguinary mutiny in 1857. Four years of death and suffering had accomplished nothing, and in 1843 Dost resumed his rule of Afghanistan, remaining on the throne until his demise twenty years later.

EIGHT



Imams in India



1842-1897



ISLAM IN INDIA [712-1761]

Islam was first established in India in 712 when Khalif Walid's warriors invaded Sind and occupied the alluvial plain created and watered by the Indus as far north as Multan. As in Persia, they left the administration of the area largely in native hands and did not coerce Hindus or Buddhists to become Muslims. Yet, in the course of time many Hindus adopted Islam. With the decline of khalifal power Sind became practically independent, as so many other regions nominally subject to the Shadow of God.

About 1000 the Muslim Ghaznavids, Turks ruling Afghanistan, extended their authority over Sind and the Punjab. Not until after their Afghan-Indian realm had succumbed to the Afghan Ghurids (1152-1186) did Islam resume the eastward advance.

Toward 1200 the Ghurids crushed the Hindu princes and

took over northern India. After the death of the Ghurid sovereign in 1206 one of his generals, a former Turkoman slave, established himself as Sultan of Delhi and extended his sway over northern India from the Punjab to Bengal. As in Iran and Sind, the administration remained in indigenous hands and there was no forced conversion. Indeed, the Muslim conquest was essentially a military occupation. Surviving the Mongol invasions, the Muslim sultans of Delhi about 1300 spread their suzerainty over the Dekkan. During the course of the fourteenth century, however, the empire disintegrated into a congeries of statelets, mostly ruled by Muslim officers.

Then in the 1520s the Turkish Babur (the Lion), a descendant of both Timur and Jenghiz Khan, invaded India with an Afghan-Turkish army and laid the foundation of the Mogul empire. Under his grandson Akbar, who ruled from 1562 to 1605 and endeavored to weld Muslims and Hindus into one nation, the Mogul realm stretched from Baluchistan and Afghanistan to the Ganges Delta and as far south as the Godavari.

In the 1630s Akbar's grandson Shah Jahan consulted Indian, Persian, and Central Asiatic architects regarding plans for a mausoleum to receive the earthly remains of his wife Mumtaz Mahal (Ornament of the Palace). For nineteen years she had been his inseparable companion and had borne him fourteen children. In 1647 the finest creation of Muslim architecture in India was complete—the milk-white Taj Mahal. Shah Jahan's thoughts must also have reverted to his beloved Mumtaz when a few years earlier he had planned the beautiful Gardens of Shalimar where fountains play and orange and pomegranate trees bloom.

Shah Jahan's son Aurangzeb, who reigned from 1658 to 1707, reversed the relatively lenient religious policy of his predecessors and thereby undermined the stability of the

Mogul empire. He persecuted Shiites and Hindus, destroying Hindu temples, forbidding religious festivals and pilgrimages, reimposing the poll tax on non-Muslims, and torturing religious leaders to death. Moreover, his crushing taxes and incessant warfare led to economic decline. Upon his death in 1707 the Mogul realm began to dissolve into its component parts.

Taking advantage of Mogul debility, the Persian monarch, Nadir Shah, invaded India in 1739 and sacked Delhi. He acquired the Peacock Throne with its inlaid pearls, rubies, emeralds, sapphires, and other precious stones simulating the plumage of two peacock figures, and the Koh-i-Nor (Mountain of Light) Diamond, later to sparkle among Queen Victoria's crown jewels.

With the Moguls reduced to a secondary power, the Hindu Mahrattas of central India sought to extend their rule northward. This aspiration was crushed by the Afghan ruler Ahmad Shah, otherwise known as the Pearl of Pearls, in a sanguinary battle at Panipat in 1761. Thus, India was without a preponderant power.



BRITISH IN INDIA [1500-1828]

This fact had not gone unnoticed in Christendom. Already in 1500 the Portuguese had established a factory on the Malabar coast. Later, the Dutch, the Danes, and the French also acquired footholds on the Indian littoral. All were overshadowed or expelled by the British East India Company. This organization, chartered by the Crown, assumed the authority of a sovereign power in India, fortifying its settlements, issuing currency, collecting taxes, and raising armed forces. After the ejection of the French in 1763 it was the paramount power in India. By 1805 it dominated all India except Rajputana, Sind, and the Punjab. It ruled certain areas directly, notably Bengal and the eastern coast, and exercised suzerainty over native potentates through residents and troops stationed on their territory at their expense and through control of their foreign policy.

In 1828 Lord William Bentinck became Governor-General. He based his policies on the conviction that British grandeur was based on Indian welfare. In pursuance of this worthy principle he dealt among other problems with suttee and thuggee.



THUGGEE

Suttee (virtuous woman) was a Brahman practice whereby a widow immolated herself on her husband's funeral pyre. While the act was voluntary, women often acted under the pressure of immemorial custom, public opinion, the belief that it was divinely sanctioned, and the conviction that the flames would rejuvenate them for reunion with their husbands in Paradise. In Bengal the widow was generally bound to the often already decomposing corpse. Should she struggle free, men with long poles pushed her back into the flames. Although Bentinck forbade the practice in 1829, the widow of an officer of the household of the Maharajah of Jodhpur committed suttee as late as 1954.

Unlike suttee, the Thugs (swindlers) could not be handled by fiat but required persistent police work. The origin of thuggee is lost in the nebulous labyrinth of time. Possibly its

primeval purpose was to preserve a balance between births and deaths. According to legend, Kali, patroness of the Thugs, first appeared on earth on the banks of the Hooghli. In commemoration of this event the site was called Kali Ghat (whence Calcutta), where stands her most venerated temple. Kali delights in the blood of men and demons and is known as the man-eater. Usually regarded as the goddess of death and destruction, she is generally portrayed as black, four-armed, with red eyes and palms, matted hair, fanglike teeth, blood-stained tongue, face, and breasts, with ear pendants of cadavers, a necklace of skulls, and a girdle of snakes. However hideous she may be when alone, apparently when with her husband, Siva, she is fair and beautiful.

In early times a monster so huge that the deepest ocean could not cover it devoured humans as soon as they were created. With her incomparable sword Kali slew it, but from each drop of its blood that fell to the ground there sprang a new demon. Kali continued to butcher them, but growing weary, she paused. From two drops of sweat that fell from her, two men came to life. Giving them her kerchief, she commanded them to strangle the demons. After completing this mission they wished to return the kerchief, but Kali bade them retain it and transmit it to their progeny to kill those not of their kind.

At first Kali relieved them of the burden of burying their victims, devouring them herself. Once, however, after choking a traveler, a novice looked back and saw Kali feasting upon the corpse with half of it still hanging from her mouth. Embarrassed and incensed, she insisted that thereafter their victims be interred. To throttle them, she gave the Thugs the hem of her garment, to slit them open to prevent swelling after death one of her ribs as a knife, and to inhume them one of her teeth as a pickaxe. Yellow and white being her favorite

colors, the strangling scarfs were generally yellow, sometimes white.

It is believed that the Thugs were descended from the pastoral Persian Sagartii, who contributed eight thousand horsemen to the armies of Xerxes in the fifth pre-Christian century. Apparently, their scions came to India in the wake of a Muslim invasion and first settled in the Delhi area. Carvings in an eighth-century cave temple at Ellora show a man who seems to be a Thug strangling a Brahman. In 1290 a thousand Thugs were captured at Delhi and there is further mention of them three centuries later. Then for hundreds of years they slip from sight. Apparently not until the nineteenth century, after they had murdered a number of sepoys on leave, did a British official divine that there existed an organized confraternity dedicated to murder and robbery.

This may seem less remarkable when it is recalled that they shared their booty with potentates, landowners, and even police authorities; that they committed their murders far from their homes; that distances were great, communications poor, and population sparse; that by posting sentries armed with concealed swords or daggers around the murder sites, they prevented the escape of intended victims; that they did not attack Europeans, for whom a vigorous search might be instituted; and that they did not induct their sons into the order until they were certain that they would enjoy the work and keep it secret. Thuggee was not only a ritual sacrifice to Kali and the highest form of sport for its practitioners, it was also a vocation, for Thugs lived from the property they stole from their prey. Indeed, many Thugs led lives of relative ease, traveling and strangling from autumn to spring and relaxing with their families the rest of the year. After the British started ferreting them out and investigating individuals without obvious means of support, many adopted farming.

Before setting out on their campaign after the end of the autumn rains, the Thugs sought omens to indicate the most favorable direction to take. For this purpose they carefully observed the head of a dead sheep, the flight of birds, the hissing of lizards, etc. En route a propitious spot for murder and loot might be revealed by the appearance of a tiger, a crow cawing on the left side of a tree, a partridge clucking on the right side, etc. On the other hand, a hare or a snake crossing the road in front of them, a crow cawing on a rock or a dead tree, or a sitting ass braying betokened misfortune. It was also considered unlucky to murder females, although it was occasionally necessary to do so in order to silence witnesses. Moreover, vagrants, potters, goldsmiths, carpenters, lepers, dancing masters, the blind and the mutilated, and men leading cows or female goats were exempt from their attentions.

Departing for their winter campaign in gangs of twenty to fifty, the Thugs pretended to be simple, cheerful travelers and sought to share the road with other wayfarers, their intended victims. They would ingratiate themselves by friendliness, amusing talk, and song. Indeed, they encouraged singing, for a singing man was easier to strangle. While a solitary voyager might be dispatched expeditiously, with groups they sometimes accompanied their prospective sufferers for days before they found an appropriate site for successful clandestine choking. Often it would be the spot where they camped for the night.

They might all be seated around the dying campfire, singing. When their leader uttered the death call, the Thugs sprang into action. Usually three Thugs devoted themselves to each victim, whose arms and legs would be seized, who would be propelled forward and kicked in the scrotum, while the

doubly knotted kerchief would be expertly manipulated around his throat until life was extinguished. If the strangulation were to take place after they had lain down to rest for the night, the death call would be "Scorpion!" or "Snake!" because it is difficult to strangle a prostrate man and such a warning would generally bring him bolt upright and in position to be garrotted. A dozen men might be murdered simultaneously in this manner.

Their bodies would then be stripped, robbed, slit, doubled up, and buried. If the Thugs were interrupted before disposing of the cadavers, they would hastily cover them and bemoan that their poor friends were suffering from a virulently infectious disease. After the corpses were inhumed, the Thugs, pleased that they had propitiated their black mother, Kali, while gratifying and enriching themselves, would sit on the graves and sing or partake of ritual sugar.

It is impossible to calculate the number of the Thugs' murders. A gang might murder as many as a thousand persons a season. There may have been forty or fifty gangs and perhaps twenty or thirty thousand wayfarers murdered annually. One Thug boasted that he had personally strangled seven hundred nineteen persons and would have considerably increased that figure had the British authorities not interrupted him.²⁶ Possibly three million persons were murdered by the Thugs during their entire organized existence.²⁷ By 1840, after hanging five hundred, incarcerating a thousand, deporting fifteen hundred to penal servitude, and resettling and reeducating five hundred who had testified against their confrères, the British had to a large extent wiped out Thuggee. During the following decades it was completely eradicated.

Thuggee has been dwelt upon at such length because in the Occident it is occasionally confused with Assassininism. From

the above account it will be seen that there was little resemblance. An Assassin generally murdered the foes of Assassinism for the furtherance of his faith and his own welfare in the afterworld. A Thug murdered to propitiate a goddess whose influence was in this world and in order to rob his victims.



ASSASSINS IN INDIA [c. 1165-1842]

Bentinck was succeeded as Governor-General by Lord Auckland, who was in office in 1841 when the fugitive forty-sixth Imam, the Aga Khan Hasan Ali Shah of Mahallat, rode into Kandahar to join the British expeditionary force in Afghanistan.

According to tradition it was the Imam Hasan II who about 1165 sent to India the first Assassin dai or pir (saint). The office of pir became of supreme significance because no Assassin hierarchy developed in India. Without the pir the faithful could not attain a knowledge of the Imam and of God. Since only beings participating in the Divine Substance were capable of understanding the Divine Nature, the pirs perforce acquired consubstantiality with God and became the bab or gateway to the Imam and the link between Man and God. In

due course, the office of pir became hereditary, generally passing to the youngest son.

The first pir, Nur al-Din (Light of the Faith), adopted the name Nur Satagur (Teacher of Pure Light) and is said to have performed a few miracles, such as making stone statues of Hindu gods dance and sing. As a result, he apparently converted many low-caste Hindus. While in ecstasy he was assassinated by a disciple.

Another great Assassin pir, Shams al-Din (Sun of the Faith), appeared in India, probably in the early fourteenth century, made converts in Kashmir, and continued on to the Indus Valley, settling at Uch, eighty miles south of Multan. It is reported that he walked on water, altered the course of the sun, and restored to life a dead child and fried birds.

Possibly even more influential than Nur and Shams was pir Sadr al-Din (Leader of the Faith). Dispatched to India by the Imam Islam Shah, he became head of the Assassins of Kashmir, the Punjab, and Sind in 1430. He facilitated the conversion of Hindus by adopting some of their beliefs and portraying his gospel as the culmination of Hinduism. He declared Ali to be the tenth stainless incarnation of the Hindu God Vishnu, which for Hindus was still in the future. Thus, as Ali's scion, the Imam became God.

On converting the Lohanas, Sadr bestowed on them the title Khojas (Honorable Converts), by which name many Indian Assassins have since been known. His action was widespread. He sent out dais and collected the tithe for the Imam from the Himalayas to the Vindhya.

He decided to lead a pilgrimage to the Imam. At the first stop he put the pilgrims' faith to a test by entering a house of ill fame. Some lost faith and defected. At the next encampment he tried his followers' faith even more rigorously.

Apparently, before he reached his destination he had succeeded in devising tests of such incredibility that he arrived at the Imam's abode alone.

Another pir, Imam Shah, who was especially active in Muslim Gujarat and who died in 1512, received from the Imam permission to visit Paradise. There he is said to have had an edifying conversation with his great-grandfather pir Sadr al-Din.

After the demise of Imam Shah, Assassin missionary activity declined. Consequently, toward the middle of the sixteenth century the Imam summoned a Sindi, Dadu, created him pir, and sent him back to India, where he performed miracles, such as inducing rainfall. As a result, conversions resumed their upward course.

This would seem to have been a temporary development, for in 1594 the Imam gave the Khojas a book that he had written, *Maxims of Fortitude*, as their twenty-sixth pir, enjoining them to obey its commands. Indeed, the very title of pir became extinct, and the Imams appointed vakils (deputies) to lead their followers.

Little is recorded of the Assassins in India during the two centuries preceding the arrival of the Aga Khan. Happy to have their incarnate God among them, they contributed a tenth of their capital to him.



FIRST AGA KHAN IN SIND [1843]

In January 1843 the Aga Khan and his horsemen reentered British service in Sind under the command of the long-haired, contentious, bearded sexagenarian Sir Charles Napier. Napier, who hoped to get a Persian cat from him, wrote that the Aga Khan was his great crony, a brave, clever, influential, fabulously wealthy man, and a great rascal. Being a god, Napier indicated, he made a virtue of any sin that he cared to commit. His adherents, whom he charged twenty rupees to kiss his hand, dared not refuse him anything. At his word they would commit murder and grant him any request—wives, daughters, slaves,* currency, property. And the old Assassin Prince, continued Napier, did not let this custom become obsolete.²⁸

* About this time (1843) Indian courts were forbidden to recognize any claim to a slave, and in 1860 slaveholding became a punishable offense in India.

The British had violated their treaties with the Baluchi mirs (or amirs) of Sind by using their territories as a base for military operations against Afghanistan. Although the mirs had perforce acquiesced, Napier now took aggressive measures against them. Infuriated, Baluchi tribesmen in February 1843 attacked the British Residency in Hyderabad.

Thereupon, Napier with twenty-four hundred men moved on Miani near the almost dry bed of the Fullali, a tributary of the Indus. Here he confronted over thirty thousand tribesmen. The British artillery opened terrible gaps in the massed multitude. Then the two armies closed, sepoy and Britishers in red



General Sir Charles James Napier in 1848—"Heroic Warrior of Miani" by Jupiter Ammon! (1782-1853). [From William F. Butler, *Sir Charles Napier* (London and New York: Macmillan & Co., 1890); engraved by W. H. Egleton from a painting by Count Pierlas]

coatees with muskets and bayonets against clansmen in multi-colored robes with swords, shields, and matchlocks. Three hours a fierce, remorseless battle raged. When the red line staggered back under the weight of numbers, "their General was there to cheer and rally them. At his voice and intrepid demeanour their strength returned . . . a skilful horseman, . . . [he] was always at the point of greatest pressure."²⁹

British officers, sword in hand, dashed into enemy ranks and engaged Baluchi chieftains in single combat. It seemed a contest of the Heroic Age of Hellas. Indeed, Napier's brother is almost Homeric in his description of the battle. At length, eight hundred cavalymen of the left wing charged. Simultaneously, the infantry advanced, pouring volley after volley into the valorous tribesmen, who slowly began to recoil. "The inspiration of genius [writes Napier's brother] had come to the aid of heroism. . . . It was . . . a stroke of generalship like that which had won Blenheim for the Duke of Marlborough. [Indeed,] in its general arrangement, in all that depended on the commander, [the battle was] a model of skill and intrepidity combined; and in its details fell nothing short of any recorded deed of arms." Nor does he hesitate to compare his brother Charles with Alexander the Great. Indeed, he employed the same oath ("By Jupiter Ammon!") as the Macedonian conqueror.³⁰

After the battle of Miani, Napier sent the Aga Khan and his Assassins to Jerruck to keep open the road between Karachi and Hyderabad. In weak-walled Jerruck on a hillock overlooking the muddy Indus the Aga Khan established himself as lord and master. He billeted his horsemen on the inhabitants, from whom he also exacted tribute. For a spell he and his men ate, drank, made merry, and devoted themselves to the fair sex, transforming, it is said, the fluvial town into a veritable Babylon, at least in spirit.

When the Baluchis threatened to attack, the Aga Khan scoffed at their beards and cast aspersions on their ancestry. Indeed, it is recounted that one evening when he was about to indulge in postprandial bacchanalia, a terrified Sindi rushed in and announced that Baluchis were moving on Jerruck. Apparently enraged that the Sindi should think that the Baluchi dogs, whose fathers' graves he had defiled, would dare to oppugn his redoubtable and exalted self, the Aga Khan ordered the bastinado to be administered to the unfortunate fellow and personally set the cadence of the blows. He had hardly completed this edifying exercise when the Baluchis scaled Jerruck's puddle walls, dashed into the town, butchered every Assassin whom they encountered, and made themselves masters of his harem, wine cellar, and other possessions.³¹

In the nocturnal confusion the Aga Khan and thirty surviving Assassins were able to flee to Napier's camp. The latter does not seem to have been informed of the circumstances of the Aga Khan's discomfiture, for he reported that he had been "wandering about Scinde with two hundred horsemen, it does not clearly appear why or wherefore, got engaged with some of these bands, and having lost the greatest part of his followers, fled with thirty for refuge to the intrenched camp on the Indus."³²

Napier assigned the Aga Khan and his men to the defense of his camp near Hyderabad, together with a motley group of eight hundred recruits, sailors, marines, convalescents, and native allies, while he, "again the heroic warrior of Miani,"³³ with a force of five thousand went on to defeat twenty-five thousand tribesmen at Hyderabad. It is said, perhaps erroneously, that Napier announced his conquest of Sind—which he called "a very advantageous, useful, humane piece of rascality"³⁴—with the Latin pun *peccavi* (I have sinned).

He again charged the Aga Khan, who had established residence at Jerruck, with keeping open the road to Karachi. He found, however, that the Aga Khan was excessively violent and that his men marauded as much as the Baluchis. Fearing that he might provoke rebellion, he replaced him. Nevertheless, the Aga Khan lent the prestige of his position to the pacification and consolidation of British dominion of Sind.



CALCUTTA [1843-1848]

From Sind the Aga Khan hoped to conquer his lost realm of Kerman, possibly even the royal egret. For these aspirations he sought British military and financial assistance, whose repayment Khoja merchants of Bombay were prepared to guarantee. Not only was British aid not forthcoming, but the Aga Khan had difficulty obtaining payment of the arrears in his allowance and the twenty thousand rupees he had borrowed in Kandahar. He intimated to the Governor-General that Britain's reputation would be besmirched if she failed to reward his great services.

Deferring to Persia's protests at the Aga Khan's machinations on her confines, however, the Governor-General requested him to leave Sind and take up residence in distant Calcutta. The Aga Khan protested that he had extensive

estates and many followers in Sind. These two sources of income enabled him to defray the monthly expenditure of twenty thousand rupees that he required for himself and his numerous retainers. He could not imagine that the Governor would wish to reduce to starvation a person of his august descent.

Nevertheless, after a disputatious and protracted exchange, the Aga Khan finally left Sind in October 1844, proceeding not to Calcutta but to Bombay, allegedly to settle the affairs of his numerous family and followers, for more than a thousand offspring, relatives, dependents, courtiers, and retainers had followed him from Persia to India. Although he asserted that his sacerdotal duties obliged him to reside in western India, it would seem that his designs on the Peacock Throne also required his presence near the Persian border.

The most serious effort to realize his ambition for sovereignty was made in 1846 by his brother, the Sirdar Abul Hasan Khan. He invaded Persia with two hundred horsemen, rallied fifteen hundred Assassins, and after initial successes was captured, sent to Teheran, and well treated. A letter from the Aga Khan was found in his possession. It urged him to pursue his campaign, while the Aga Khan was distracting the Shah's attention with gifts of elephants and other animals from Hindustan.

While providing for the Shah's zoölogical divertissement, the Aga Khan continued to sojourn in Bombay, whose Governor wrote that he did not wish to appear harsh toward a person who had evinced such zeal and bravery in the field in the British cause and who was revered by many Indians. Nevertheless, he was pressed, though with the utmost courtesy, to move to Calcutta. At length, in the spring of 1847 he departed with a retinue of fifty-two persons.

In Calcutta he did not cease to importune the authorities to

permit him to return to Bombay, to allow him to settle near the Persian border, to assist him to obtain the province of Kerman, to engage him to conquer Turkestan for Britain, etc. There was also an apparent reconciliation with the Shah, who invited him to Persia, promising to restore his hereditary possessions. Suspecting treachery, he declined the invitation. In November 1848 the Shah died, and the following month the Governor-General authorized the Aga Khan to board a steamer for Bombay.



BOMBAY [1848–1881]

At Bombay the Aga Khan made plans to return to Persia by way of Baluchistan. But the Persian government regarded him as a formidable pretender and insisted that he enter the country at Bushir, apparently intending to seize him as soon as he set foot ashore. The British authorities concurred with the Persian government regarding his entry and, moreover, refused to remit his pension outside British territory. At length, after a vexing correspondence with the British Raj, he declared in 1851 that, beside praying for the perpetual existence of the Persian state, he would abstain from any activity that might lead to intrigue or conspiracy. He remained faithful to Britain, offering his services whenever there was unrest and loyally supporting the Raj during the tragic Sepoy Mutiny of 1857.

He had residences in Bombay, Bangalore, and later in Poona. In Bombay on sacred anniversaries, such as that of

Husain's martyrdom, he would preside in the Khoja council hall. On that particular holiday he would distribute water mixed with the sacred sand of Karbala. At his Saturday receptions his votaries were permitted to kiss his hand.

When not engaged in devotional duties, he might visit his stables, having one of the finest studs in India with Arabian, English, Australian, and Turkoman steeds. He might also attend the races, of which he was a passionate devotee. Or he might go hawking or deer hunting.

He was at odds with a small number of dissidents, who already in 1829 had refused to pay him the customary tithe. He had then sent an agent and his maternal grandmother, Marie Bibi, to enforce obedience. That energetic old lady had harangued the assembled Khojas, who excommunicated the recusants. Later they had yielded and returned to the fold. After the arrival of the Aga Khan in Bombay, however, controversy again arose. There was objection to having Khoja women call on the Aga Khan and to his control over his communicants' lives and property. But the dissenters went even further, rejected the Aga Khan's divinity, denied that he had any connection with the Khojas, and seceded.

Apparently their refusal to obey the Imam so incensed orthodox Assassins that in 1850 a band invaded their separate council hall and killed four of them. A British court in Bombay condemned four of the assailants to be hanged. The hanged men were regarded as martyrs. The Aga Khan himself wrote Koranic verses on their corpses and interred them in the most sacred Khoja site in Bombay.

Discord continued and a court judgment granted the schismatics the right to use Khoja communal property on the ground that the Aga Khan had no authority to exclude anyone from its use.

In 1861 the Aga Khan circulated among Khoja congrega-

tions a declaration of faith concerning in particular ablutions, funeral rites, and marriage ceremonies. It was designed to eliminate Hindu, Sunnite, and other Shiite practices and was signed by almost all Khojas.

While the Aga Khan viewed the document as an instrument to bring Khoja practices into conformity with those of his holy forebears, the insurgents regarded it as an attempt to change their traditional practices. They sued the Aga Khan, demanding an accounting of all community property, a declaration that income therefrom be used for the exclusive benefit of the Khoja community, the regular election of treasurers and accountants, and an injunction to prevent his interfering with the management of community property or the election of officers, his excommunicating any Khojas, his performing marriage ceremonies in the council hall, and his requesting contributions.

The separatists' claim not to be subject to the Aga Khan's authority was based on the contention that they were not Shiites but Sunnites. In delivering judgment in 1866, Sir Joseph Arnould indicated that to the Sunnite creed "There is no God but God and Muhammad is the Apostle of God" the Shiites had added "and Ali, the companion of Muhammad, is the Vicar of God"; that Sunnites pray five times a day with arms folded across the chest, while Shiites pray three times a day with arms at their sides; that Sunnites honor the first three Khalifs, while Shiites execrate them as usurpers and venerate the holy family of Muhammad, Ali, Fatima, Hasan, and Husain; that Shiites celebrate Husain's martyrdom, make pilgrimages to Karbala, drink the sacred dust of Karbala, and carry beads made of it, which they touch while praying. In all these matters, wrote Sir Joseph, the Khojas follow Shiite practice. Such Sunnite customs (as in marriage and funeral rites) that they observe may be attributed to the Shiite

practice of concealing their religious convictions when in jeopardy.

Moreover, continued Sir Joseph, the Khojas were originally Hindus of the trading class occupying the Upper Sind. They were converted by the Assassin pir Sadr al-Din in the fifteenth century and spread to large trading towns of western India, eastern Arabia, eastern Africa, and Zanzibar. Apparently, since their conversion they had sent religious offerings to their Imams in Persia, to whom they also made pilgrimages and whose descent from Ali through Ismail they chant in their prayers. Hence, he declared, they owed the customary dues to the Aga Khan as the spiritual head of their community.

With the judgment in his favor, the Aga Khan transferred all the community property into his own name, spent the remaining years of his long life at Poona, Bombay, or Bangalore, indulged his passion for racehorses, was host to the Duke of Edinburgh and the Prince of Wales, and died at the ripe age of eighty-one in 1881.

The third Aga Khan at the age of eight, installed as Imam, Bombay, 1885. [*From the Ismailia Association for Pakistan, Souvenir . . .*]





THIRD AGA KHAN IN BOMBAY [1881-1897]

The first Aga Khan was succeeded by his son Aga Ali Shah, who died after an Imamate of four years and was followed by his eight-year-old son, Sultan Muhammad Shah, with an uncle as regent. Under the stern guidance of his matriarchal Persian mother this stocky, myopic boy received the Occidental part of his education from an Englishman and two Irishmen, all three recommended by the local Jesuits. In 1897 he married his cousin Shahzadi, but the union was unhappy and was dissolved. When during the same year bubonic plague swept into Bombay, he had himself publicly inoculated. Many Khojas followed suit and the death rate among them was lower than among other autochthonous members of the community.

1868-1869



Dynasts in Europe



NINE



THIRD AGA KHAN IN THREE CONTINENTS [1898-1914]

In 1898 the Aga Khan left Aga Hall, his palace on Malabar Hill outside Bombay with its many relatives, intimates and pensioners, and journeyed to Europe. He was knighted by Queen Victoria, and at dinner at Windsor Castle he, who himself had a blessed appetite, was amazed at the quantity that diminutive dynast consumed. He was enraptured with life in Europe and thereafter for six decades was a familiar figure, notably in France and Britain, at coronations, state funerals, social functions, the opera, the ballet, the theater, resorts, and, in particular, the races. In 1952 he shattered precedent at Epsom Downs by winning the Derby for the fifth time.

His life in Europe was interrupted by frequent sojourns in India and occasional visits to his communicants in Zanzibar and eastern Africa. He constantly urged them to identify

themselves in dress, customs, outlook, and aspirations with the country in which they lived. In India, apart from his imamic duties and his efforts to improve the spiritual, intellectual, and physical standards of his flock, he devoted himself to the social and political problems of that great peninsula.

A man with a broad outlook, he sought to collaborate with the other Muslims and the Hindus of India in furthering the well-being of the conglomerate population. He endeavored to tear Indian Muslims from their lethargy. He attacked purdah and child-marriage and worked for the emancipation of Indian women.

He strove to combat social ills through education. Indeed, indicating that Indian poverty and disease were largely the result of mass ignorance, he urged the British Viceroy to institute a system of universal primary education. Moreover, he did much to transform the Muslim college at Aligarh, founded in 1875, into a university to which students from all Islam came. Typically, he insisted upon the inclusion of Sanskrit and Hindu philosophy in its curriculum.

More and more he became the spokesman of India's Muslims, for whom he sought greater participation in India's political life. But underlying his political activities was loyalty to Britain, the keynote of Imamic policy since the days of his colorful grandfather.

Meanwhile, the Aga Khan had become enamored of Teresa Magliano, a nineteen-year-old ballerina of the Monte Carlo Opera. She abandoned her career and in the spring of 1908 they went to Cairo, where they were married according to Muslim law. In 1911 in Torino she gave birth to a son, the Aly Khan.



FIRST WORLD WAR [1914–1933]

Three years later the First World War erupted, ranging France, Britain, and Russia against Germany and the Danube Monarchy. Although he was thirty-seven, was becoming corpulent, and had no military experience, the Aga Khan offered to serve in a British or Indian unit. He was declared unfit for military duties.

Because of his prestige in Islam he was able to render Britain invaluable services elsewhere. He failed in his first assignment—to prevent Turkey's entry into the war on the side of the Central Powers. This created a conflict of loyalties for orthodox Muslims, for the Sultan of Turkey was also the Sunnite Khalif, who in November 1914 declared the war a Holy War. The Aga Khan appealed to the Muslims of India and of all Islam to disregard the call and support the Allies. Moreover, he was successful in the dealings that led to the

retirement of the last Khedive of Egypt, Abbas Hilmi, whom the British distrusted. In 1916 the Aga Khan was stricken with a painful disease and withdrew from public life until the summer of 1919. Though he was cured, his eyeballs retained an excessive convexity.

It was a far different world into which he emerged—a world torn by hatred and hunger, the excesses of nationalism and communism, the misuse and violation of noble ideals. Turkey had lost her empire and was reduced to the areas inhabited mainly by Turks—Anatolia and eastern Thrace. But the Allies seemed bent on partitioning even this residual state. Indian Muslims were incensed. By 1922 Britain and Turkey seemed on the verge of war. The Aga Khan worked feverishly for peace and the national Turkish state. Lloyd George was overthrown, the Treaty of Lausanne was concluded (July 1923), and the Indian Council of State recommended to the Norwegian Parliament the bestowal of the Nobel Peace Prize on the Aga Khan.

In 1926 his wife Teresa died. Four years later he married Andrée Carron of Chambéry, whom he had known since she was a young girl. A son, Sadruddin, was born to them in 1933. In 1965 Sadruddin was to become United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.



INDIAN INDEPENDENCE [1857-1947]

Meanwhile, within India the demand for greater autonomy had led to violence. As a result of the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 Queen Victoria had transferred the governance of India from the East India Company to the Crown in November 1858. At the same time she pledged religious liberty, respect for ancient usage, and the right of Indians to hold office in British India. Moreover, she guaranteed the autonomy of allied Indian princes who had by treaty preserved their states from direct British rule. Universities were founded in Bombay, Madras, and Calcutta (1857), provincial legislative councils were established (1861), and local administrative boards were constituted (1865).

Many educated Indians felt that these measures were insufficient and in 1885 founded the predominantly Hindu

Indian National Congress to press for a greater share in the governance of the peninsula. Progress was made in that direction. Between 1892 and 1909 the Viceroy's Council was opened to Indians and the number of provincial legislatures was doubled. Furthermore, the legislatures were made partly elective and given budgetary and interpellative privileges. The number of universities and primary schools was increased.

These advances toward autonomy precipitated a conflict between Hindus and Muslims over voting procedure. The Hindus favored unitary voting as Indians, not as Hindus and Muslims. In such elections the Hindu majority would submerge the Muslim minority. The Aga Khan and other Muslim leaders wanted Hindus and Muslims to vote separately. Moreover, in order to protect minority rights, they desired the guaranty of a certain number of minority legislative seats in those districts and provinces in which either Hindus or Muslims constituted a minority. In 1906 they obtained the Viceroy's assent to the principles of separate electorates and weighted representation. They founded the All-India Muslim League, the Muslim counterpart of the Congress Party, and chose the Aga Khan as its first president.

When Britain became involved in war in 1914 India contributed funds and half a million men, of whom over twenty-six thousand were killed and seventy thousand wounded. In gratitude the British Parliament granted India a greater measure of autonomy, enlarging the legislative councils, establishing the Chamber of Princes, and permitting the appointment of Indians to certain provincial ministries. Indians gave violent expression to their disappointment that the reforms did not go further. In April 1919 at Amritsar troops fired into a crowd, killing almost four hundred persons and wounding twelve hundred. The following year Gandhi, head of the Congress Party, started the non-cooperative movement, which boycotted

elections, law courts, British merchandise, and governmental educational institutions.

There followed a period of unrest and disorder. It was aggravated among Indian Muslims by Britain's policy toward Turkey and among both Hindus and Muslims by hostility to Indian immigrants in British East and South Africa. To add to the general confusion, there was fighting between Muslims and Hindus. Although Gandhi suspended his campaign of civil disobedience after a mob had hacked twenty-one policemen to death in 1922, he was condemned to six years' incarceration. Indian terrorism continued, civil disobedience was renewed, complete independence was demanded, Gandhi and his lieutenants were released and rearrested.

The Aga Khan disapproved of Gandhi's course, fearing that it would lead to chaos. Moreover, he deplored the failure of the Congress Party to accept the Muslim minority's desire to be treated as a nation within a nation and was convinced that, as a result, there could be no All-India solution of the self-government problem. He believed that in view of India's extent and religious divisions the only suitable form of government was a federation within the British Empire with autonomy and residuary powers vested in the constituent states; that Muslims should not be deprived of the right to elect their own representatives in the various legislatures; that in provinces in which Muslims constituted a minority they must continue to have at least the percentage of representation then accorded them; that Hindu minorities in predominantly Muslim provinces should be similarly treated; that Muslims have their due share in the central and provincial cabinets and the civil service; and that the promotion and protection of Muslim education, languages, religion, personal law, and charitable institutions should be safeguarded. The All-India Muslim

Conference in Delhi in 1928, over which he presided, largely endorsed these views, which thereafter formed the basis of all negotiations with the Congress Party and the British government.

At length, in 1935 Britain granted India a federal constitution providing for a government responsible to a bicameral legislature except for defense and foreign affairs, which remained within the domain of the Viceroy. It was rejected by both Hindus and Muslims. As a result it became effective only on a provincial level, where it did not require electoral acceptance.

Thus, when the Second World War broke out in September 1939, there was no native central government. Following Britain's lead, the Viceroy declared war on Germany. In protest, the provincial cabinets of the Congress Party resigned. Again Indian troops were used to fight Britain's battles. India raised a volunteer army of two million and suffered casualties of a hundred eighty thousand. With Japanese forces moving closer to Indian confines, violence erupted in the peninsula.

By the end of the war the key question was no longer whether India was to gain independence but whether Hindus and Muslims could agree on a constitution. They could not. The Congress Party sought a unitary state. In such a state the ninety million Muslims would be engulfed by two hundred sixty million Hindus, and the Muslims did not want to entrust their future to the Hindu majority. Partition seemed the only way to assure the continued existence of Islamic society, and in August 1947 two Dominions came into being: Hindu India, occupying the bulk of the peninsula; and Muslim Pakistan, possessing the Indus Valley in the west and Bengal a thousand miles to the east. The two states were born amid horrible Hindu-Muslim massacres, in which hundreds of thousands of

men, women, and children lost their lives. Millions of Muslims fled to Pakistan and Hindus to India.

Pakistan's first Governor-General was the Khoja Muhammad Ali Jinnah. The Aga Khan urged Pakistanis to improve their economic well-being by reducing consumption and promoting capital investment.



KHOJA RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

For Khojas, God is abstract and unknowable and they are forbidden to contemplate His attributes. Their deity is the Imam, to whom they address their prayers and who may at any time change their doctrines. He inherits his divinity from Ali, the tenth incarnation of God. Muhammad, Jesus, David, and Moses are his prophets. Khojas tend to neglect the Koran and have their own religious books, notably Sadr al-Din's *Das Avatar*, which describes the ten incarnations of the Hindu God Vishnu, of whom Ali is the last.

Love for Ali, his immediate family, and his scion, the Imam, is the center of the Khojas' religious feeling and the basis of their faith. One group of Assassins, the Maulais of the highlands of northwestern India and Central Asia, believe that the Archangel mistook Muhammad for Ali when imparting the contents of the Koran.

Love for Ali effaces sin. Without it salvation is impossible. Nor is salvation possible without recognition of the current Imam. Soon after passing into the other world, the Khoja is asked whether he had recognized the Imam. If his reply is affirmative, his passage to Heaven follows. If negative, he is subjected to a long cycle of animal rebirths. Ultimately, he is reborn human and has another opportunity to affirm his recognition of the Imam. The cycle continues until he is able to respond positively.

Khojas, like other Assassins, have no mosques and do not face Mecca during their three daily prayers, which are between sunset and sunrise. Possibly these dim hours were chosen by pir Dadu to prevent detection. Unlike the Assassins of Iran, who do not fast at all, and unlike the Sunnites, who fast from dawn to dusk during Ramadan, the Khojas fast one day during Ramadan from bedtime to noon. Their pilgrimages are made to the Imam, to Karbala, and to Ali's tomb at Najaf. Every new moon they deposit in their council hall a tithe (now an eighth) of their income for the Imam. Apparently other dues considerably increase the percentage of Khojas' offerings, and the financial question has led to occasional secessions of reformist groups, who generally do not recognize the divinity of the Aga Khan.

Assassins are still highly secretive about their religion. The most ordinary doctrines are enveloped in mystery, and many Assassin theological writings are carefully guarded. There is a Maulais dictum to the effect that a man should hide his religion and his womenfolk. Other Maulais dicta are: Better blind oneself than envy others' prosperity; Better cut off one's hand than take others' property; If a neighbor's sheep wander into your field, let them eat their fill before driving them out; A good Maulais need not pray and fast to achieve salvation; It would be better to mutilate oneself than to disobey the pir.³⁵

Muslims do not attach the sacramental significance to marriage that Christians do. According to Khoja practice, a man may not take a second wife during the lifetime of his first without the consent of the Khoja council. Conciliar permission, however, is usually granted if financial provision is made for the first wife's maintenance. The veil for women was completely abolished by the third Aga Khan.

While the fisc is to a large extent centralized in the sacred person of the Imam, Khoja communities are largely autonomous in administration and have the right of excommunication.



JUBILEES [1932-1955]

In the 1930s the Aga Khan requested the government of India to transfer territory to him, even if no larger than Tangier or Vatican City, which the Assassins could call their own with their own laws and their own financial center. The government did not accede.

In 1932 the Aga Khan became India's Chief Delegate to the League of Nations and witnessed the collapse of the order established in Paris in 1919. In 1937 he was elected President of the Assembly of the expiring League, whose new palace in Geneva he inaugurated. When in September 1939 the Second World War erupted, he appealed to Islam, as he had in 1914, to support the British cause. He spent the greater part of the war in Switzerland, where he and his third wife were divorced in 1943. About a year later, he married Yvette Labrousse, Miss France of 1930.

The jubilee of the Aga Khan's Imamate was celebrated in Bombay and Nairobi in 1936. His flocks gave him his weight in gold (220 pounds). Ten years later the sixtieth anniversary was commemorated by the gift of his weight (now 243½ pounds) in diamonds in Bombay and Dar es-Salaam (Haven of Peace). Possibly some of the believers looked at the trim figure of his elder son, the Aly Khan, and reflected that future festivals might be less expensive. The diamonds were lent by the London Diamond Syndicate and were shipped and weighed in bulletproof plastic boxes. The Assassins then contributed their worth in money. In 1955 the Aga Khan was too ill to attend the observances of his seventieth (platinum) jubilee, and the funds were sent to him. The proceeds of the festive occasions were devoted to the benefit of Assassin communities.



FOURTH AGA KHAN [1957–1968]

In July 1957 the Aga Khan died in his villa at Versoix on Lake Lemman at the age of seventy-nine. It had been assumed that his elder son, the Aly Khan, would succeed him as Imam. In 1936 Aly had married Joan Guinness, the daughter of Baron Churston and the divorced wife of Loel Guinness. Two sons had stemmed from this union—Karim, born in 1937, and Aryn. The marriage had been dissolved in 1949, and amid much publicity Aly and the actress Rita Hayworth had married, produced a daughter, Yasmin, and divorced in 1953. Aly continued to lead a gay life. His father apparently considered him unsuitable for the Imamate and named Aly's elder son, Karim. Aly, who became the head of Pakistan's Delegation to the United Nations, was killed in an automobile accident in 1960.

Karim, the forty-ninth Imam and fourth Aga Khan, was



The third Aga Khan with his grandsons (sons of the Aly Khan) at Cannes, about 1953. On the left is Ayn, on the right Karim, the present Imam and fourth Aga Khan. [*From the Ismailia Association for Pakistan, Souvenir . . .*]

twenty, tall, shy, handsome, and studious. He had completed his Junior year at Harvard, where he majored in Oriental history and played on the varsity soccer team, and where his name appeared regularly on the Dean's List.

At Versoix in 1957 he received and shook hands with Assassin leaders from distant regions. Although the women were dressed in colorful silk saris, most of the men wore dark European attire—a tribute to the urgings of the late Aga Khan. Karim assured them that he would continue his grandfather's policies, not only for their spiritual uplift, but also for their material betterment, notably in the extension of credit at low interest rates, which had raised the prosperity of Assassin communities to unprecedented heights.

Soon, accompanied by the widowed Begum, Aly, Karim, and others, the body of the late Imam was flown to Aswan, where it was temporarily interred in the garden of the Villa Nur es-Salaam (Light of Peace). In February 1959 it was to be reburied in a new mausoleum on a hill overlooking the Nile. A hundred barbers were required to shave the three thousand attending white-clad Assassins, who may not enter a funeral procession bearded.

In October in Dar es-Salaam in an amphitheater festooned in Alid red and green and surrounded by the new homes and apartment houses of the prospering Assassin community, Karim, pale, tense, and wearing a white knee-length tunic, was installed as Imam. He again promised his followers to guide them to further spiritual and material progress. Although the mother tongue of most of the Assassins in Dar es-Salaam is the Indian Gujarati, he addressed them in English. The ceremony, which was to be repeated in other African and Asian communities, was concluded with the Assassin Boy Scout band playing "Way down upon the Swanee River."

Here and elsewhere he iterated and reiterated his grand-

father's appeals to Assassins for more education, identification with the country of their abode, fraternity with other Muslims, and collaboration with all races. Later, he ordered his communicants to become citizens of the countries they inhabit. This proved useful when new African states began to expel aliens. He also commanded the migration of Assassins from South Africa to Kenya because South African racial laws discriminated against them. He is proud that Assassin schools and hospitals are open to persons of every color and religion.

Having devoted a year to his spiritual empire, Karim returned to Harvard in September 1958, and the following June he was graduated with honors. Much concerned with the economic welfare of his followers, he has sent experts to their communities in Asia and Africa to determine where and which industries might be developed. As a result there have been established many new industries, whose profits have been devoted to provide hospitals, educational institutions, inexpensive insurance, and low-interest building loans for increasingly prosperous Assassin congregations.

He also heads a group of European investors, who are transforming thirty-eight miles of beachfront in northeastern Sardinia, the Emerald Coast, into a fabulous resort area, whose ultimate cost is expected to be about three hundred million dollars.

It is perhaps advantageous for him to live in Europe. He is thus not obliged to choose a residence among certain communicants and thereby offend others. But he visits his flock in Asia and Africa three or four months a year, traveling in his gold and black jet airplane. Among other homes he has a residence and a center in Paris, a converted medieval monastery on the Ile de la Cité.



THE ASSASSINS TODAY

As a result of an enterprising commercial spirit, careful organization, and widespread cooperation, Assassin congregations, although concentrated between China and Eastern Africa, have spread throughout the world.

In countries where the social and economic system is favorable they have made exceptional progress in health, wealth, and education under the enlightened Imamates of the third Aga Khan and his grandson. While Assassin communities may have variant names, beliefs, and practices, they are united by their common adherence to the Imam and by the generic name of Ismailis.

Their communities are generally highly organized and in practice endogamous. Thus, the Assassins of Africa are still overwhelmingly of Indian descent with only a few hundred recently converted Negroes. Indeed, their minor missionary

activities seem directed more to conversion to Islam than to Assassinism. Owing to their wealth, their influence in East Africa is disproportionate to their relatively small numbers. They act as spokesmen for Muslims in general, take a leading part in Islamic organizations, and make substantial contributions to common Muslim causes. Despite this panislamic policy and generosity, inaugurated by the third Aga Khan, it would appear that other Muslims still look askance at Assassins. While the less educated Assassins perhaps practically worship the Imam, he is no longer called God. He rewards the services and contributions of his followers with titles of Assassin nobility, which are highly regarded in East Africa.

Guided by the Imam and their own councils, Assassin leaders are sometimes elected, sometimes appointed by the Imam, and in Syria, Iran, and Central Asia are hereditary. It would seem that Assassins, especially in Africa, seek to adopt what they consider desirable Occidental usages. The constitution of 1962 for African Assassins forbids polygamy. In this case the law merely sanctioned the general practice of monogamy.

The Imam's large private fortune has rendered him independent of his followers' revenue and he acts largely as a clearing house to redistribute most of it. Moreover, he is the owner of Assassin communal property, which is managed by his attorneys. While he is the final authority, in practice Assassin communities are largely self-governing. Indeed, Imamic decrees are usually issued only after considerable consultation with Assassin councils.

In comparing Assassin advances and prosperity in the twentieth century with those of other Muslims, it would appear that an omnipotent Imam, who is regarded as the embodiment of God's Will and who is wisely counseled, renders it easier to adjust to modern developments than strict adherence to tradition or sacred scriptures.

In an effort to ascertain the number of Assassins in the world, the author wrote to several Assassin authorities on three continents. Apart from one estimate of fifty million, he encountered a wall of silence. If he were pressed to express an opinion, he would venture the view that press reports of ten to fifteen million are exaggerated and conjecture that the followers of the Aga Khan do not exceed three million.

ABRIDGED ALID GENEALOGY TO 952

Hashim [Muhammad's great-grandfather]

Abdallah	Abu Talib	Abbas
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Muhammad the Prophet
[d. 632]

Fatima [d. 632] = Ali [d. 661] = Hanafite woman

Hasan [d. c. 670]	Husain [d. 680]	Muhammad ben Hanafiya [d. 700]
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<hr style="width: 100%;"/> Muhammad Sherifs of Morocco	Abdallah Idris Idrisids of N. Africa	<hr style="width: 100%;"/> Muhammad Bakir [d. c. 732] Zaidites of Iran & Arabia Jafar Sadik [d. 765]	Zaid [d. c. 744] Abu Hashim [d. 716] reputedly ceded rights to Abbasids
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 Ismail [d. 760]

Musa [d. 799]

Muhammad

Twelver Imams

Three Hidden Ismaili Imams

 Muhammad Muntasir
[Twelfth Imam, dis-
appeared c. 878]

Kaim [Second Fatimid Khalif, d. 946]

Mansur [Third Fatimid Khalif, d. 952]

ABRIDGED LIST OF IMAMS (952-1968)

Muiz [d. 975]	}	Fatimid Khalifs
Aziz [d. 996]		
Hakim [d. 1021]		
Zahir [d. 1035]		
Mustansir [d. 1094]		

Nizar	Muhammad	Mustali [d. 1101]
	Hafiz [d. 1149]	Amir [d. 1130]
Grandson or Posthumous Son		

Yusuf	Zafir [d. 1154]
Adid [d. 1171]	Faiz [d. 1160]

Hasan Sabbah [d. 1124]	}	Grand Masters*
Umid [d. 1138]		
Muhammad [d. 1162]		

Hasan II [d. 1166]	}	Nizari Imams
Muhammad II [d. 1210]		
Hasan III [d. 1221]		
Aladdin [d. 1255]		
Khurshah [d. 1256]		
First Aga Khan [d. 1881]		
Second Aga Khan [d. 1885]		
Third Aga Khan [d. 1957]		
Fourth Aga Khan [49th Imam, b. 1937]		

* These three Grand Masters did not claim descent from Ali and were consequently not Imams.

NOTES

1. Nizam al-Mulk, *The Book of Government* (London, 1960), p. 214.
2. Lewis, *The Origins of Ismailism* (Cambridge, England, 1940), p. 54.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 50-54.
4. Hodgson, *The Order of Assassins* (The Hague, 1955), pp. 54-56, 325-328; Shahrastani, *Religionspartheien und Philosophen-Schulen*, translated by Haarbrücker (Halle, 1850-1851), Vol. I, pp. 225-230.
5. Hodgson, pp. 82-83.
6. Muscati, *Hasan bin Sabbah* (Karachi, 1953), pp. 104-105.
7. Picklay, *History of the Ismailis* (Bombay, 1940), p. 41.
8. Muscati, pp. 29-41.
9. Defrémery, *Recherches sur le règne de Barkiarok* (Paris, 1853), p. 79n.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 86-89.
11. This valuable report was obtained from the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.
12. The author is grateful for Boyle's brilliant translation of Juvaini, *The History of the World Conqueror* (Manchester, England, 1958).
13. For the Assassins' resurrectional religious concepts the writer is indebted to *Kalami Pir* and *Ishaq, Haft Bab*, both translated,

- edited, and introduced by Ivanow (Bombay, 1935, 1939); Ivanow, *A Brief Survey of the Evolution of Ismailism* (Leiden, 1952); Hodgson; and Juvaini.
14. Defrémery in *Journal Asiatique*, 5th ser., 3, 1854.
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 18. Lewis in *Arabica*, loc. cit.
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 20. See Saunders' pungent *Aspects of the Crusades* (Christchurch, N.Z., 1962), pp. 64-68.
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ABBREVIATIONS

A	<i>Arabica</i>
AKGWC	<i>Abhandlungen der königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaft zu Göttingen</i>
An	<i>Antaios</i>
AUBFA	<i>Alexandria University Bulletin of the Faculty of Arts</i>
BIFAOC	<i>Bulletin de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire</i>
BSOAS	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies</i>
CJ	<i>Cavalry Journal</i>
CR	<i>Calcutta Review</i>
FO	<i>Fundgruben des Orients</i>
GUOST	<i>Glasgow University Oriental Society Transactions</i>
HJAS	<i>Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies</i>
IC	<i>Islamic Culture</i>
IHQ	<i>Indian Historical Quarterly</i>
JA	<i>Journal Asiatique</i>
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JASB	<i>Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bombay</i>
JIH	<i>Journal of Indian History</i>
JRA	<i>Journal of the Royal Artillery</i>
JRAS	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society</i>
JRASB	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal</i>

- JSS *Journal of Semitic Studies*
 JWH *Journal of World History*
 McM *Macmillan's Magazine*
 MES *Middle Eastern Studies*
 MM *Milla wa-Milla*
 MR *Muslim Review*
 MW *Muslim World*
 O *Oriens*
 RCASJ *Royal Central Asian Society Journal*
 RHCHO *Recueil des historiens des croisades: Historiens orientaux*
 RMM *Revue du monde musulman*
 ROL *Revue de l'Orient latin*
 S *Speculum*
 SI *Studia Islamica*
 SJA *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology*
 WZKM *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*
 ZA *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*

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